‘A unique space’: Sports Volunteering in the Greater Manchester City Region

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled 'A unique space': Sports Volunteering in the Greater Manchester City Region' represents the results of my own work except where specified in the thesis.

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Abstract

Volunteers are a vital resource in the organisation and delivery of sport and physical activity in event, club and informal settings (Cuskelly, Hoye and Auld, 2006). The sports sector has faced increasing challenges in recent years from increased modernisation, formalisation of the volunteer management processes, pressure to work with wider groups of stakeholders across multiple sectors and technology, moving at a pace which is hard for the sector to keep up with. Understanding the ways volunteers are managed, that is, recruited, retained and rewarded amidst national policy shifts during a period of high exogenous pressures remains, a multifaceted challenge. As such this research undertakes an empirical interpretive examination of sports volunteering in the devolved Greater Manchester (GM) City Region focused on collaborative governance and delivery. Moving forward contemporary scholarship in this area, this thesis helps further our understanding by providing insight into how the complexities of collaborative delivery principles (Ansell and Gash, 2008) and developments in policy and regional governance have influenced sports volunteer management in a rapidly changing environment. Significantly, adopting an interpretivist approach to interrogate a single-embedded case study of the GM City Region, a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with volunteers, volunteer and strategic leads from across the region revealed important insight into the unique space of sports volunteering in the GM City Region. Findings show there is a complex landscape of sports volunteer management with tensions regarding volunteer identity and the fragmentation allowing for local autonomy but leading to confusion. These are set within a collaborative governance delivery model, highlighting the complexity of actors operating within external pressures on the sports volunteering landscape. The research then revisits existing collaborative governance models and theory in light of the empirical findings from sports volunteer stakeholders in the GM City Region.

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List of Abbreviations

AGMA – Association of Greater Manchester Authorities

CA - Combined Authority

CCG – Clinical Commissioning Groups

COP – Community of Practice

CVO – Council for Voluntary Organisations

GMC – Greater Manchester Council

GMCR - Greater Manchester City Region

GMCA – Greater Manchester City Authority

GMVCSE – Greater Manchester Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

HRM – Human Resource Management

NM – New Managerialism

NPG – New Public Governance

NPM - New Public Management

NPS – New Public Service

PSE – Public Service Ethos

VCSE – Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise

VMS – Volunteer Management Systems

VSC – Voluntary Sport Club

VSO – Voluntary Sports Organisations

WSP – Whole Sport Plans

Chapter One – Introduction

1.0 Chapter Overview

Volunteering is an essential aspect of many communities in order to provide a range of support and services across many different sport and physical activities. Volunteering has been explored within the social policy, sport management and volunteering literatures (Cuskelly, Hoye and Auld, 2006; Nichols *et al*., 2016; Nichols *et al*, 2019; Abrams, Horsham and Davies, 2023). Nichols *et al*., (2016:p. iii) note that 'volunteering and sports participation are both extremely popular activities'. Volunteering and the way volunteers are managed have felt the impact of policy shifts and exogenous pressures over the decades. The sports volunteering sector has increasingly faced challenges such as widening pressure to work with a larger group of stakeholders across different sectors (Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2009) and to incorporate wider physical activity, health and wellbeing agendas (DCMS, 2023d). This has resulted in a move towards a more collaborative model of governance (Shilbury, O'Boyle and Ferkins, 2020). Collaborative governance emerges as the most appropriate framework for understanding sports volunteering delivery mechanisms in the Greater Manchester (GM) City Region. Collaborative governance is seen as an appropriate approach for addressing the complexity between volunteer stakeholders and related organisations that also characterises the GM landscape (Chaskin, 2001; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000; Bianchi, Nasi and Rivenbark, 2021) Collaborative governance places emphasis on trust building, fostering commitment, and developing shared understanding (Ansell and Gash, 2008) and aligns with the relational approach of volunteer engagement (Nichols *et al*., 2019). Collaborative governance focuses on power dynamics, institutional design, and contextual factors (Ansell and Gash, 2008) and provides analytical tools for examining how the GM City Region's networks and policy environment shape sports volunteering practice. The framework's flexibility in accommodating diverse stakeholder perspectives and interests makes it particularly suited to an application in sports volunteering (Shilbury and Ferkins, 2015; Edwards and Leadbetter, 2016; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2016) where participants bring varying motivations, capacities, and expectations to collaborative arrangements.

The Institute for Volunteering Research policy found that policy changes have increased programmes of volunteering (such as National Citizenship Service) but have also necessitated

new ways to capture volunteering via university or work-based volunteering (Ramsey, 2012). Abrams, Horsham and Davies (2023) suggest that these more prescribed routes into volunteering have not yet been captured well by existing definitions and measures. These scholars further note that the 'civil society paradigm' of volunteering dominates the literature (Abrams *et al.*, 2023). Within this paradigm the focus is organisation-based volunteering where volunteers have an altruistic internal drive to volunteer within their community (Lyons, Wijkstrom and Clary, 1998; Rochester, 2006; Paine, Ockenden and Stuart, 2010). While this paradigm is highly relevant to the thesis, volunteering has changed in recent years (Nichols, 2017; Rochester, 2018) and there are now more informal, episodic, micro volunteering behaviours.

This chapter will introduce the thesis and provide a rationale for understanding volunteer management within sports organisations in the Greater Manchester (GM) region using the theoretical lens of collaborative governance. By adopting collaborative governance as the primary theoretical lens, this study can examine not only how sports volunteering currently operates in the GM City Region, but also how collaborative approaches might enhance volunteer experience and community outcomes across the region's sports landscape. Policy development and the wider landscape relating to sport, physical activity and volunteering are important for setting the context of this thesis. There have been fiscal crises, Brexit and the global Covid-19 pandemic during the time this thesis was written, and these are reflected in the state of the sports sector and the policy that drives sport, physical activity, and sports volunteering levels (Beacom, Ziakas and Trendafilova et al, 2023).

The analysis in this thesis is focused on how collaborative delivery principles have influenced sports volunteering in a rapidly changing environment. The policy, strategic and external context through which sport and physical activity are operating can be mapped through sports and volunteering policy initiatives and grey literature (as can be seen in Chapters Two and Four).

1.1 The landscape

Sport is a well-loved institutional domain with athletes performing at the elite levels across most sports, but sport is also organised through a network of regional, local and grassroots clubs, supported by other institutions and sectors (Evans *et al.,* 2020). The sports sector and sports

volunteering are instruments to be used by central government for policy formation and as ways to address policy interventions (Houlihan, 1997a; Taylor, Panagouleas and Nichols, 2012). One of the latest Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) policy documents discusses how sports programmes are used as a way to provide intervention and prevention for young people away from crime, and into more positive opportunities such as volunteering (DCMS, 2023b).

Volunteering in wider society is well researched, for example within health, social services, and the cultural and heritage sectors (Hoggett and Bishop, 1985; Creigh-Tyte and Thomas, 2001; Taylor *et al.,* 2003), with this type of volunteering being seen as vital support for those in need and more charitable than sports volunteering (Davis Smith, 1998; Coulthard, Walker and Morgan, 2002). Volunteering in sport appears split from the mainstream voluntary sector, yet sport accounts for over 50% of all volunteering in the UK (Join In, 2014; DCMS, 2023b) and has a certain uniqueness, as volunteers will also produce and consume the sporting experience (Harris, Mori and Collins, 2009). According to the figures from Sport England's Active Lives Survey in 2022, 8.8 million people - 19% of the adult population - gave up their time to support others to be active in 2021. This shows growth on the previous year, with signs that there is some recovery but not yet a return to pre Covid-19 pandemic levels (Betteridge, 2023).

In terms of the rationale for the research there have been limited regional studies of sports volunteering through a collaborative governance lens. There have been several studies examining gaps in the general sports volunteering landscape for example, Baum and Lockstone (2007) produced a paper that sought to produce a research framework for sports volunteering and identified gaps in the research. Groom and Taylor (2014) then went on to conduct research on behalf of Sport England to provide an insight into the current state of volunteering in the UK. Using a systematic literature review, the research papers identified were predominantly quantitative. Nichols *et al* (2016) reviewed literature and found that there are opportunities for further research linked to motivations and pathways within volunteering. These studies demonstrated that volunteering which, is ultimately about people, their experiences and their motivations and the impacts they have, should be researched qualitatively to obtain the richness of the stories (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Research in sports volunteering using collaborative governance as the theoretical lens are limited

for example Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) conducted what is believed to one of the first action research studies using collaborative governance to improve the governance capabilities of Bowls Australia. O'Boyle and Shilbury (2016) study focused on trust impacts on collaboration within three sports in Australia. Edwards and Leadbetter (2016) produced a study that explored and critiques collaborative governance structures within a small province in Canada. This limited application of collaborative governance theory to sports volunteering contexts provides an opportunity to address a significant gap through an in-depth regional study of how collaborative governance mechanisms operate within sports volunteering.

In terms of the philosophical stance of the current literature, the research seems to be split into three schools of thought; positivist, pragmatist and interpretivist, with the majority of research focused on the positivist school. Byers' (2013) research highlights using critical realism as a new perspective for 'control' of volunteers, and in doing so found that existing research tends to take a positivist view (e.g., Schlesinger, Egli and Nagel, 2013; Hallman *et al*., 2016; Hallman and Artime, 2022). The positivist approaches tend to be focused on statistical evidence such as the size of the volunteering sector, the demographics or the volunteer motivations using existing scales and surveys. The pragmatist approach is described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) as where the purpose and nature of research is of utmost importance and there is a clear rejection of the positivist-interpretivist dichotomy (Shipway, Jago and Deery, 2020). The interpretivist approach has provided detailed subjective accounts of volunteers in community clubs, sports events, or the experiences of different demographics of volunteers (Byers, 2013). An understanding of the social process of volunteering is required, to look at the 'why' and the 'how' of volunteer management and support. Interpretive philosophy is concerned with human behaviour and actions (Ivanoff and Hultberg, 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2007). The approach this thesis will therefore employ an interpretive, case study approach to explore the unique space of sports volunteer management in the Greater Manchester City Region space within a collaborative governance lens.

1.1.1 Greater Manchester City Region

This thesis is set within Greater Manchester (GM) City Region, which is the second largest city region in the UK, made up of ten metropolitan boroughs (Harding, 2020). GM has a rich history

and is proud of its collaborative governance over more than sixty years, giving the space a unique perspective on collaborative working (Ward *et al,* 2015). The region is primarily an urban conurbation with two cities of Manchester and Salford, surrounded by the other eight boroughs which are a diverse mix of urban centres and rural areas (Harding, 2020). Sport features heavily within the culture of Greater Manchester, with several of the top teams across Football, Rugby, Cricket, Netball and Ice Hockey based in the region, and grassroots activity across every sport. Manchester City ranks as the fifth-best sporting city across the globe (BCW, 2023). There has been strong support for sports events, and the region has bid for and hosted several major events since the early 2000s. The Greater Manchester Moving Active Partnership has a long history of engaging participation and volunteering across all the regions and works closely with 10GM and the VCSE sector (10GM, 2023).

1.2 The research problem

As explained above, there are many ongoing debates in the area of sports and physical activity volunteering, and the impact of public policy and governance typologies on this sector. However, there is a need to examine in more detail how collaborative governance mechanisms have developed in sports volunteering contexts (Shilbury, O' Boyle and Ferkins, 2016, 2020) and been influenced by policy and governance developments (Houlihan 1997a, 1997b; Houlihan and Green, 2009; Adams, 2011; Dowling, Leopkey and Smith, 2018), particularly as the voluntary sector increasingly operates through multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborative arrangements with other organisations and sectors (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Leventhal *et al*., 2010; Ibsen and Levinsen, 2019). This research consequently aims to understand collaborative governance process in sports volunteering by examining how stakeholders engage in collaborative governance conditions within the evolving policy and organisational landscape of the GM City Region. Therefore, the following research questions and objectives address this aim:

1.2.1 Research Questions

1. How do collaborative governance principles such as 'starting conditions' influence the volunteer management practices of sports organisations within the Greater Manchester (GM) City Region?
2. How have regional collaborative governance developments influenced the institutional design of volunteer management in the GM City Region?

3. How do volunteer stakeholders interpret facilitative leadership and adapt to complexity and change in volunteer management and delivery in the GM City Region?
4. How have volunteer stakeholders interpreted collaborative governance processes, outcomes and challenges in terms of delivery, such as managing, recruiting, rewarding and retaining volunteers?

1.2.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine how collaborative governance starting conditions influence volunteer management practices within sports organisations across the GM City Region.
2. To analyse the impact of regional collaborative governance developments on the institutional design and frameworks for volunteer management within the GM City Region's sports sector.
3. To investigate how volunteer stakeholders interpret facilitative leadership styles and adapt their approaches when facing complexity and change in volunteer management and delivery within the GM context.
4. To evaluate stakeholder interpretations of collaborative governance processes, outcomes, and challenges specifically related to volunteer delivery mechanisms (recruitment, management, retention, and reward systems) within the GM City Region.

1.2.3 Clarification of the terminology

The landscape is complicated, with a broad spectrum of actors and perspectives relating to the sports and physical activity volunteering infrastructure. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, the terminology of sports and physical activity volunteering and stakeholders needs clarifying. The sports sector itself has gone through terminology changes from 'sport and leisure' to 'sport and recreation' to the current 'sport and physical activity'. CIMSPA (2023) classifies *sport* as involving performance sport, community sport and adventure sport whilst *physical activity* consists of exercise and fitness, health and wellbeing, and leisure activities. For the purposes of this thesis, ***Sport and Physical Activity*** will be used to describe the sector. The voluntary sector has also seen different terminology, including voluntary sector, community sector, not for profit sector, the and the third way. There has been academic debate around what constitutes this sector and how to define it. This has mainly been shaped by academic, historical and policy discourse (Alcock, 2010). The policy discourse has moved through several phases, from charity-centric to more voluntary-led following the Wolfenden report in the 1970s, then to a more partnership-led focus in the late 1990s under the Labour Government, leading to more use of the

'third sector' terminology (Kendall, 2009; Alcock, 2010) (More detail can be seen in chapter 2). For this thesis ***voluntary sector*** and ***voluntary sports clubs (VSC)*** will be used.

The Sport England definition of sports volunteering has been used in this thesis, whereby an 'individual volunteers helping others in sport and receiving either no remuneration or only expenses. This includes those volunteering for organisations (formal volunteers) and those helping others in sport, but not through organisations (informal volunteers)' (Sport England, 2003). The terms '**sports volunteering'** and '**volunteering in sport'** also include any volunteering in physical activity, as there has been an absorption of physical activity within the sports volunteering sector.

The sports volunteering infrastructure includes organisations that manage, support or promote volunteering in sport or physical activity, and have expertise and networks including community volunteer services (CVS), volunteer resource centres, national governing bodies of sport, community organisations, voluntary sports clubs (VSC), Voluntary, Community, or Social Enterprises (VCSEs), private organisations and local government (Shipway, Jago and Deery, 2020). Freeman (1984, p.46) defines ***stakeholders*** as 'those actors who are vital to the continued growth and survival of the organisation'. For the purposes of this thesis volunteer stakeholders are defined as volunteers, volunteer leads/managers and strategic leads with a remit that includes volunteering in sport and physical activity, and who may work or volunteer at one of the above organisation types. More detail about the stakeholders involved can be found in the methodology chapter (5).

1.3 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis makes a significant contribution to the understanding of sports volunteering through a collaborative governance lens by illuminating three critical dimensions i) collaborative processes within volunteer engagement, ii) the contextual factors and conditions that shape collaborative relationships and iii) the mechanisms that facilitate muti-stakeholder collaboration in sports volunteering. Previous qualitative studies have explored sports volunteering from angles such as defining volunteering (Noble, 1991; Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth, 1996; D'Souza *et al.,* 2011), typologies of volunteering (Cuskelly, 2004; Lasby and Sperling, 2007; Chelladurai,

2009; Breuer and Wicker, 2011), characteristics of volunteers (Davis Smith, 1998; Attwood *et al.*, 2003; Lowe *et al.,* 2007; D'Souza *et al*., 2011), motivations of volunteers (Bang and Chelladurai, 2003, 2009; Hallman and Harms, 2012; Peachy *et al*., 2014), and management of volunteers (Cuskelly, 2004; Nichols *et al.,* 2005; Nichols and Shepherd, 2006; Byers, 2013; Cho, Wong and Chiu., 2020). However, there are limited studies that have explored collaborative governance process in sports volunteering contexts (Shilbury and Ferkins, 2015; Edwards and Leadbetter,2016; O'Boyle and Shilbury (2016); Shilbury, O' Boyle and Ferkins, 2016, 2020) representing a clear gaps where collaborative governance theory has been applied to understand sports volunteering in regional contexts. This research addresses this gap by examining collaborative governance mechanisms in Greater Manchester City Region's sports volunteering ecosystem, making both theoretical and empirical contributions. Theoretically, the study extends Ansell and Gash's collaborative governance framework by identifying volunteer identity, volunteer infrastructure, belonging, and place as essential elements for understanding collaboration in volunteering contexts. Empirically, it provides in-depth insights into how collaborative governance operates within a city-region's sports volunteering networks, offering practical guidance for sports organizations and policymakers seeking to foster sustainable collaborative relationships with volunteers and enhance collective capacity for sports delivery across Greater Manchester and beyond.

1.4 Mapping out the Thesis.

Following this introduction, ***Chapter 2*** provides an analysis of key developments in sport and volunteering policy since the 1960s, and an analysis of the structure of sport and the volunteering landscape.

Chapter 3 will then explore the conceptual frameworks and development of governance typologies, starting with New Public Management (NPM), New Public Governance (NPG), New Public Services before exploring collaborative governance and identifying the Ansell and Gash (2008) collaborative governance model as the theoretical framework

Chapter 4 will introduce the Greater Manchester Landscape, governance structures and significant policy developments.

Chapter 5 examines the research approach and design used within this thesis. The research uses a case study approach to investigate the research questions and objectives from an in-depth perspective.

Chapter 6 and **7** will *s*eek to examine the findings against the research questions across the higher order themes of: The Volunteer Experience: Identity, Power Dynamics and Motivational Factors, Facilitation of opportunities *(Chapter 6),* Contextual Landscapes: Policy, Regional and External Influences on Sports Volunteering and Relational Foundations: Building Collaboration *(Chapter 7*)

Chapter 8 is where the analysis and discussion will take place focusing on analysing the findings against the lens of the Ansell and Gash (2008) Collaborative governance model, using the starting conditions to explore the findings.

The concluding chapter, ***Chapter 8*** will draw together the previous chapters in order to summarise the key findings that will fulfil the research aim, questions and objectives. The main contributions to knowledge and practice will also be articulated, along with identifying any limitations of the research and the significance of this for future research and practice.

Chapter Two – Literature background and context

2.0 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter will provide a review of the sports volunteering literature to set the context for the thesis before a historical overview of sports and volunteering policy and the current structure of sport in England. The chapter will also provide a summary of key governance and policy debates related to policy delivery in this arena. It is important that the scene is set and a thorough understanding of the history of policy relating to sport and sports volunteering is demonstrated before reviewing the debates in governance and public management in Chapter Three and the regional governance of GM in Chapter Four. In qualitative research, the context is integral to the research design, therefore it is important to set the scene and explain the context of volunteering in sport. This requires critical reflection and an examination of the background and literature to the topic, whether social or historical, to gain an understanding of the current situation (Klein and Myers, 1999). Policy making is an ever-shifting field due to governance structures and different political parties having changed priorities over the years (Houlihan, 1997a; Bevir and Rhodes, 2016). There are some debates (Thiel *et al.,* 2016; Evans *et al.,* 2020) where questions are raised as to where *sport* sits i.e., is it part of the welfare system, the private or public or voluntary sectors, or across all areas as a vehicle to change (Spaaij, 2009; Coalter, 2007, 2006; Jarvie, 2006). Volunteering, particularly in sport, is also increasingly seen as straddling across the sectors, including the *fourth sector* (Williams, 2003). Heley (2017, p.77) describes this sector as 'organizations that trade for social good'.

It is apparent that research on sports volunteers thus far is fragmented, diverse and very often unconnected, as well as of varying research disciplines, methodologies, and quality. Costa *et al.* (2006) also found that there is an increasingly competitive market for volunteer labour, not just within sporting organisations and events, which highlights the need to understand the factors that make a volunteer experience attractive. However, lack of funds and dedicated HR systems in sporting organisations may constrain this. Groom and Taylor (2014) believe in-depth qualitative research is required to understand people and micro-political relationships involved in volunteering in sport – volunteers, key stakeholders, clubs, regional and national infrastructure, and event volunteering. Baum and Lockstone (2007) believe there is a lack of

holistic research that takes into account the wide range of themes and issues. Therefore, an exploration to review volunteer management practices across the varied agencies who work collaboratively with volunteering in sport would be beneficial.

2.1 Volunteering

2.1.1 Defining volunteering.

It is important to define what volunteering is, and yet this has proved to be a complex task, as volunteering is not clearly defined in the literature. Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010, p.410) state that 'the study of volunteerism has generated multiple theoretical and conceptual models, yet no integrated theory has emerged'. Sheard (1995) and Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010) both explain what volunteering is by defining what it is *not*, low or semi-paid work, compulsorily coerced informal assistance for friends or family, or self-help religious or leisure activities. Another early definition came from Davis Smith (1999) who found in their research that there are five elements that comprise a conceptual framework of volunteering, 'Rewards, free will, benefit received, organisational setting and levels of commitment (Baum and Lockstone, 2007, p.32). Defining what a volunteer is has caused great debate amongst academics, however there is some agreement that there are three main criteria to be considered; that it is activity, which is unpaid, undertaken by one's own free will, and of benefit to others (Noble, 1991; Cnaan, Handy and Wadsworth, 1996; D'Souza *et al.,* 2011). Ellis Paine, Hill and Rochester (2010) argue that these three criteria should be viewed on a continuum upon which activities could be placed there to determine if in fact the activity is volunteering.

Volunteering in sport is a subcategory of broader volunteering activities with a variety of roles supporting elite sport, as well as community, education, coaching and VSC activity (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2020). Several academics have tried to define what sports volunteering is using similar criteria to the general volunteering definitions above. The Australian Bureau of Sport (ABS) (2002, p.40) defines volunteering in sport as participating in 'roles undertaken to support, arrange and/or run organised sport and physical activity'. Stebbins (1996) theorised that some researchers believe that volunteering in sport can be categorised as a leisure activity and went on to conceptualise volunteers who volunteer as a form of serious leisure to be 'career volunteers'. In further research Cuskelly, Harrington and Stebbins (2003) found further evidence

that career volunteers had higher levels of commitment to the community sports organisation than those who were marginal volunteers. Some discussions of definitions of sports volunteering exclude special event volunteers (Du Boulay, 1996; Baum and Lockstone, 2007), believing them to require a different definition to volunteering within a community setting due to the short-term nature of the roles. These traditional definitions of volunteering both generically and in sport seem very rigid and do not account for the variety of types of volunteering or the variety of sports organisations the volunteer could be volunteering in. Overgaard (2018, p.130) challenges the traditional definitions of research as 'most research focuses on 'volunteering,' rather than paid and unpaid, formal and informal'. Overgaard goes on to suggest that volunteering is 'foremost a form of unpaid labour…we need a new language' (2018, p.139). Rimes *et al*. (2023) discuss how organisational relationships vary between paid and volunteer workforce with McAllum (2018) confirming that tensions can occur where there is not clear boundaries. Shachar, von Essen and Hustinx (2019, p.148) discuss how volunteering needs to be explored 'as a constructed phenomenon whose boundaries are managed and utilised by a variety of actors'. This article goes on to examine 'hybridization and purification' and how there is an ongoing tension between the two with a constant hybridization in the public realm and yet the 'simultaneous efforts of its promoters to purify it' (ibid, 2019; p.259). Volunteering is therefore complex, with no clear definitions which covers a multitude of activity, sectors, and organisations (Hustinx, 2010). According to Keleman (2017, p.1242) 'there are at least three main schools of thought that conceptualise volunteering, based on the nature of the activities undertaken (active vs passive; discretionary vs compulsory), the purpose of volunteering (serving oneself, an organisation, a community or the society at large) and the temporal element inscribed in volunteering activities (long-term vs short-term involvement)'. Nichols *et al.* (2016) found that within England around 95% of volunteering in sport is formalised and linked to organisations, although Harris, Nichols and Taylor (2017) believed that sports participation is becoming more individualised, with running seeing an increase in participation (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2020).

Sport England's latest strategies now have sections focusing on volunteering, and they have developed a specific sports volunteering strategy *Volunteering in an Active Nation 2017-2021.* This strategy had claims to revolutionise volunteering, by investing in volunteering and through

the facilitation and creation of opportunities. The latest strategy is the Vision for volunteering project, a ten-year collaborative project to create a better future for volunteering, with themes of awareness and appreciation, power, equity and inclusion, collaboration, experimentation (Vision for Volunteering, 2023). There has also been more direct investment from DCMS into volunteering with the Volunteering Futures Fund where £7million funding was made available for volunteering projects in 2021/22 and additional match funding in 2023. This provided opportunities for voluntary and community organisations to test and trial volunteer solutions to known barriers using micro, flexible and digital approaches (DCMS, 2023d).

2.1.2 Typology of Volunteering

Hoggett and Bishop's early research in this area (1985) found that the voluntary sector consists of great diversity in terms of organisations and explored the nature of the volunteer associations in sport clubs. Cuskelly (2004) discusses how the volunteer workforce plays a vital part within community sport. Other key authors (Lasby and Sperling, 2007; Wicker and Breuer, 2011) have also highlighted the importance of volunteers in voluntary and not for profit organisations. Scholars over the years have attempted to classify characteristics of the different types of volunteering. Bang and Chelladurai (2009) followed up on the work of MacDuff (1995) who pointed to a typology of volunteers, ranging from continuous to episodic. Continuous volunteers being those who volunteer in community sports organisations for a lengthy period, and episodic being those who provide a service for a sporting event or as a one off for a sports club. Handy, Mook and Quarter (2006) classified episodic volunteers through the number of events they volunteered at as episodic, genuine episodic and habitual episodic, whereas those who committed to regular long-term volunteering within an organisation were classified as continuous volunteers (Hayton and Blundell, 2021).

Adams and Deane's (2009) research attempted to try and define and label sports volunteers, and discussed how sports volunteers are categorised as a continuum of formal and informal volunteering, with formal being through an organisation on a regular basis, and informal volunteering more of an ad-hoc basis or to help friends or relatives to achieve goals. The research adopted a more interpretive approach to ensure that when considering individuals who volunteer, understanding that they are subject to external forces, which structure the individual

(Layder, 1994; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). However, it is still not clear whether this classification of volunteering actually helps improve the sports volunteer experience or just helps to understand sport volunteer behaviour. Ayres (2022) found that whilst informal governance is not a new phenomenon it has remained on the outskirts of much of the research.

Rooney *et al.* (2004) found that those who display volunteering behaviours such as coaching sport, reported that this was not volunteering. Elmose-Østerlund et al. (2021) in their research found that many sport clubs rely on volunteers to provide any activity for their members, with most volunteer contributions being viewed as valuable and therefore members cannot be viewed as customers as they are expected to volunteer in some format. Abrams, Horsham and Davies (2023) went on to confirm that club members (volunteers) do not report informal volunteering as *volunteering*.

Allison (2000) found that most volunteers worked in the community club setting (formal) and that it was vital that the relationship between club, volunteer, and the social elements of both of these matched in terms of expectations. Following the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games there was a significant rise in event volunteers (Jones and Stokes, 2003; Coalter, 2004). There may be expectations from VSCs that you must be one or the other, continuous/formal, or episodic/informal, rather than allowing individuals to transfer easily between the two.

Some definitions of volunteering rationalise volunteering as being altruistic, however volunteering as an altruistic activity is being challenged by the literature, as there is now an understanding of the two-way exchange or a transaction. Several models have developed this concept and acknowledge that altruism and self-interest can work side by side (Godbout, 1995; Stebbins, 1996). Stebbins (2000) later identified tensions between the two classifications, 'the tensions between the sense of obligation and choosing to volunteer, and how volunteering falls in the space between work and leisure' (Giulianotti, Collison and Darnell, 2021, p.955). Taylor (2004) and Rozmiarek, Poczta and Malchrowicz-Mośko (2021) emphasise that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are different from altruistic motivations, yet all could be achieved through volunteering in sport.

There are also emerging volunteer types emerging, such as microvolunteering. Microvolunteering as a relatively new phenomenon is being transformational for volunteers and organisations. Nichols *et al.* (2016) define this as 'one-off volunteering which involves a short and defined time period and in which the volunteer may have limited attachment to the organisation.' Heley, Yarker and Jones (2022, p.76-77) stated that 'microvolunteering has been lauded as having potential to better incorporate those with limited time and mobility into the volunteer landscape'. This type of volunteering is closely linked to community action or active citizenship.

One other newer term emerging from volunteer circles is 'voluntold'. Tiderington, Bosk and Mendez (2021, p.8) define voluntold as being 'to characterize voluntary services which clients are strongly encouraged to participate in as a function of program expectations. That is, clients are presented services as voluntary, but the implicit expectation is that client participation is compulsory.' There is little academic literature in this area but there are several studies which discuss it mainly in the health and education sectors. Individuals now volunteer in return for a qualification or experience (D'Souza *et al.,* 2011; Ellis Paine, Hill and Rochester, 2010) but how much of this transactional volunteering is pulling away from the original definitions of volunteering?

Holdsworth and Brewis (2014, pp.204-205) researched student volunteering at Higher Education Institutions and commented on whether the 'push for young people to volunteer and the belief that they will benefit from doing so, might undermine the voluntary nature of these activities.' The Guardian (2013), in response to a government announcement in 2013 about the Help to Work scheme where the long-term unemployed volunteer to gain skills and experience, commented that this kind of forced volunteering devalues traditional volunteering and the definition of what a volunteer is. This all links back to the development of the Skills Agenda during the Blair New Labour period. Some scholars have drawn specific attention to the links between volunteering and education, particularly in contexts (such as the UK) where Higher Education student volunteering is supported by government and through policy (Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012). The importance of volunteering for students as an educational experience often presumes that students will develop new skills through volunteering, that the institutions supporting

volunteers (i.e., schools or universities) will develop stronger community relations, and that there are clear beneficiaries of volunteer activity (Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012, Giulianotti, Collison and Darnell 2021, p. 953-954).

One type of volunteering which is seen especially in VSCs is parental volunteering. Whittaker and Holland-Smith (2016, p.356) commented that a parental sports volunteer chooses this 'through a sense of parental responsibility' but may also have other motives such as improving their CV through the acquisition of skills. Hallman and Artime (2022, p.271) researched the mutual relationship between sport and cultural volunteering, and noted other benefits of parental volunteers, finding that 'individuals whose parents have been engaged in volunteering are more likely to volunteer, which confirmed the crucial role of parents'. Family relationships and socio-economic placing are also important influences in decisions to volunteer (Nesbit, 2012; Lancee and Radl, 2014; Einolf, 2018; Downward, Hallman and Rasciute, 2020).

2.1.3 Measuring Sports Volunteering

Sport is one of the largest areas of volunteering nationally (Davis Smith, 1998; Attwood *et al.*, 2003; Taylor, Panagouleas and Nichols, 2012). There have been several studies since the 1990s to determine the size and scope of the voluntary sector within sport using various data collection methods and from a wide range of countries. The voluntary sector was first attempted to be classified by the Henley Centre for Forecasting in 1992 by placing a value amount on the amount of voluntary work in sport, however their research was limited to a small sample of 600 clubs (Henley Centre for Forecasting, 1992). The Sports Council/Leisure Industries Research Centre (LIRC), who found that the size of the sector was equivalent to 108,000 full-time workers, followed up this research in 1996. Taylor (2004) conducted research on behalf of Sport England in 2002 and found that 5.4 million adults volunteered within the sports sector and that this accounted for 26% of all volunteering activity that took place in VSCs in England (Taylor *et al.,* 2003). The latest figures that were published from Sport England in 2013 estimated that voluntary support equated to 400,000 full-time jobs and was valued at £2.7billion per annum (Sport England, 2013). Kokolakakis, Gratton and Grohall (2019) in Downward, Hallman and Rasciute (eds) comment that in 2010 the voluntary sector also generated approximately 11% of paid FTE sport employment. Join In produced the Hidden Diamonds report in 2014, in which they

refer to a speech made the then Bank of England Chief Economist Andrew Haldane. The report states that in his speech, Haldane 'described volunteering as 'big business' and talked of the 'eyewatering' value that it creates. But he also noted that volunteering is a 'hidden jewel' whose social worth is rarely the subject of a public valuation' (Join In, 2014). In that same report Join In were able to calculate that each volunteer produced over £16,000 worth of social value to their community (ibid, 2014). According to the Benefact Group (2022) the value of volunteering from the whole sector to the UK in 2022 was £18.7billion. All these figures are now outdated and there have been few moves to show recent calculations. In 2017 the Sport England Strategy *Volunteering in an Active Nation* included a statistic that 5.6 million people volunteer in sport or physical activity every month and the latest strategy *Uniting the Movement* discusses how the metrics for measuring success/activity in sport or volunteering will change. There is now a recognition that overall performance at a national level against a target is a 'blunt instrument' and that thousands of organisations and individuals influence the progress towards that target, therefore Sport England will still use Active Lives surveys, but will then also use qualitative measures and more local information (Sport England, 2020). The latest Active Lives survey shows that more than 8.8 million adults gave up their time to support (not volunteer, notice the change in terminology) sport and physical activity in the 12-month period November 2021-2022, and that there has been a bounce back with volunteering numbers post-Covid (Active Lives Survey, 2023).

2.1.4 Characteristics of Volunteers

Numerous studies have examined the descriptive characteristics of the makeup of sports volunteers, very often with varied and inconsistent results (Davis Smith, 1998; Attwood *et al.*, 2003; Lowe *et al.,* 2007; D'Souza *et al.*, 2011). D'Souza *et al*. (2011) found that it is often wealthier sectors of the population, with spare time, skills and an interest in the sector who are generally older, whilst those from lower socio-economic groups, those with disabilities or from ethnic minority groups show lower levels of volunteering. The greatest level of agreement between the studies is when considering gender. Taylor *et al.* (2003) and Lowe *et al*. (2007) agree that men are more likely to volunteer in the sport sector (67% male, 33% female). The Active Adults survey (2008/09) and Sport Wales (2010) research echoed this statistic, and also discovered that men

are most likely to volunteer as coaches and women as administrators. The most recent Active People Survey (APS) (2013) also echoed these statistics that more men volunteered in sport during the 2012/2013 period.

Sports volunteers often emerge from within their own sport (Vermeulen and Verweel, 2009). This could be one of the issues within sports volunteering, as can be why clubs are seen as closed off to people from outside of the sport. Nicholls *et al*., (2005, p.12) reported 'the very nature of voluntary sports organisations is being transformed'. Volunteering in sport is different to volunteering in other contexts, as participants will produce and consume the sporting experience (Groom and Taylor, 2014). A close relationship means that sports volunteers emerge from within their own sport (Vermeulen and Verweel, 2009). This could be one of the issues within sports volunteering though, where there is a reluctance to recruit from outside the club, which can be why some clubs are seen as closed off to people from outside of the sport (Nichols, Tacon and Muir, 2012, p.365). Hallett, Gombert and Hurley (2021, p.494) found that it can be difficult to recruit volunteers generally, even when there are 'expectations of reciprocity'.

Analysing data from a previous APS through regression analysis, Taylor, Panagouleas and Nichols (2012, p.217) attributed their findings to men's higher rates of organized sports participation, noting that "since sports volunteers are often recruited from within clubs, and from ex-participants", this would explain the link. However, Groom and Taylor (2014), when analysing the APS, found that the percentage has changed, showing on average that the split is now 61% for males and 39% for females, which could be an indicator of a favourable transition. Age is an area where the studies show the most variation. Davis Smith (1998), Attwood *et al.* (2003) and Sport England (2009) found that younger people have the highest volunteering rates, whereas the Sports Council (1996) and Taylor *et al.* (2003) found that the 35-59 age group had the highest incidence of sports volunteering. Taylor, Panagouleas and Nichols (2012) ran a regression analysis study and found that age is an important factor on the decision to volunteer, with the 16-24 age group having the highest tendency to volunteer, but 35–59-year-olds also have high levels, while 55–64-year-olds devote the most time to volunteering. Coyne and Coyne Snr (2001) in their golf-based research found though that the veteran volunteer (i.e., a volunteer with experience of at least one prior large, professional golf tournament) should be targeted when recruiting for other

golf tournaments and that 'love of golf is the sine qua non for attracting volunteers' (ibid, 2001, p.199).

Ethnicity is also classified as an important factor on the likelihood of future volunteering. Attwood *et al*. (2003) and Sport England (2009) found those from a White British background have higher volunteering levels, yet Taylor, Panagouleas and Nichols (2012) and Groom and Taylor (2014), who analysed APS data, found that all White, Asian, and Black subgroups do volunteer but with varying levels. Income levels and paid work, household income, socio-economic group and education were shown not to have important effects on the amount of time given up for volunteering within sport, however full-time students have high levels of volunteering (Taylor, Panagouleas and Nichols, 2012).

2.1.5 Motivations of Volunteers

There is a wealth of literature in the areas of motivation and determinants (Downward, Hallman and Rasciute, 2020). The significant factors for volunteering have all been defined differently and are therefore difficult to compare. The motivating factors are different between paid workers and volunteers with volunteers having more intrinsic motivations (Liao-Trith, 2001; Hoye *et al.,* 2008; Dallmeyer, Breuer and Feiler, 2023) whereas Same *et al.* (2020) found that volunteers need to have their actions acknowledged. The situations that volunteers are engaged in are also very diverse, from local sporting organisations or community clubs to international championships and mega events such as the Olympic Games, though usually only one event has been analysed, therefore can motivations be compared between these different types of volunteers and events? (Hallman and Harms, 2012).

Bang and Chelladurai (2003, 2009) developed the Volunteer Motivational Scale for International Sporting Events (VMS-ISE). This research validated that there are six motivational dimensions that explain why people want to volunteer at events. These are 1) Altruistic reasons, 2) Patriotism, 3) Interpersonal contacts, 4) Career Orientation, 5) Personal Growth, 6) Extrinsic Rewards. Bang and Ross (2009) then updated the model, as the patriotism dimension did not allow for smaller events or community sports organisations to utilise the research, and so added the factor of community involvement into the patriotism dimension. The scale was validated at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games and another dimension was added, being love of sport. There

have been other studies (Coyne and Coyne Snr, 2001), which had already identified love of sport, however this research was only based on descriptive analysis. Handy et al (2010) gathered research about young people and their motivations to volunteer from 12 countries. They discovered there were three main categories of motivation (altruism, CV building/resume and social). Dean (2014: p.6) commented that this research whilst interesting was 'worrying' in that young people who volunteered primarily to build their skills experience for their CV volunteered less regularly and with fewer hours. In contrast to this Dean's (2016) research however found that reported motivations can be both 'instrumental *and* altruistic'.

Hallman and Harms (2012) conducted a quantitative study to discover motivations at two sporting events (handball and equestrian), considering whether intentions/motivations were the same for different sports, and whether motivations influence intentions to volunteer at different events or within sports clubs. The Bang and Chelladurai (2009) VMS-ISE scale was used, as love of sport was included in this study. The study concluded that motivations between the participants at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games (Bang and Chelladurai, 2009) and Hallman and Harms' (2012) study is that a younger demographic was recorded, and personal growth was higher. This may be because volunteering at a mega event such as the Olympic Games rates higher on other elements such as patriotism, and that at the smaller local events volunteers place higher emphasis on personal growth. The study also found that volunteer motivation based on engagement had impact on intentions to volunteer in the future, however the sample sizes for this study are relatively small and further research into intentions for future volunteering needs to be explored.

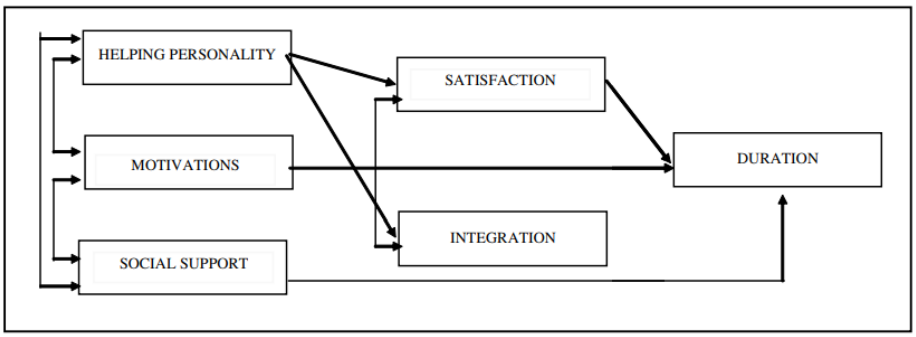
A reasonable assumption is that those who volunteer at mega sporting events exhibit some characteristics of those who volunteer in other contexts (Baum and Lockstone, 2007), however, they could also exhibit features from those who volunteer in more traditional forms of volunteering. Atchley (1989, p.183) cited in Cuskelly (2004), researching why individuals choose to volunteer, found that continuity theory explains this, as 'adults are drawn by the weight of past experiences to use continuity as a...strategy for dealing with changes associated with normal aging', meaning that athletes will progress from competing into volunteering to continue engaging with the sport they love. This can also be seen as the motivation to 'give something

back'. Younger volunteers however may be motivated by the benefits of volunteering such as skill development, qualification achievement and improvement to their CV (Coalter, 2004). Hayton and Blundell (2021, p.94) found that event volunteering can indeed 'include employability-boosting skill development, social interaction and friendship'.

Peachey *et al.* (2014) used a functional approach to motivation and studied the motivations of volunteers who chose to take part in the World Scholar-Athlete Games. The findings show that while several factors motivate volunteers, if volunteer satisfaction levels are high then retention will also be high. Peachey *et al*. (2014) concluded that the volunteer experience must be attractive, and factors which affect volunteer satisfaction should be minimised. Angosto *et al.* (2021, p.2) confirmed that volunteering motivations have been widely studied, and various multi-dimensional models have been proposed'.

One framework developed to explain the volunteer process, i.e., the stages and analysis of volunteers, is the Volunteer Process Model (Omoto and Snyder, 2002, p.849; Snyder and Omoto, 2008, p.7) seen in Figure 1. Omoto and Snyder (2002, p.849) commented on their model that it was 'not so much a theory of volunteerism but as a broad framework for organising our work and that of others on volunteerism and for helping to identify conceptual issues for future'. This framework was criticised by Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010) for not differentiating between complex stages and transitions involved in the volunteer experience itself and treating them as a single category. The interesting sections on this model relating to this thesis are the social support and integration linked to volunteer management.

Figure 1: Volunteer Process Model (Omoto and Snyder, 2002, p.849, 2008, p.7)



Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy (2010) went on to create a conceptual framework - the *Hybrid Conceptual Framework of Volunteering* to advance the understanding of volunteering. The team created three levels of complexity; the problem of definition, the problem of multidisciplinary, and the problem of theory as multidimensional (see Figure 2). This model is much more detailed and includes a much wider range of complexity.

Figure 2: A hybrid conceptual framework for volunteering (Hustinx, Cnaan and Handy, 2010)

Layers of complexity	Theoretical building blocks	Key frameworks and approaches
The problem of definition	What do we study?	—Defining what volunteering is not —Defining what volunteering is —Volunteering as a social construct
The problem of multidisciplinarity	Why do we study it?	—Economists: impure altruism —Sociologists: social cohesion and social welfare —Psychologists: prosocial personality —Political scientists: citizenship and democracy
The problem of theory as multidimensional	Theory as explanation: —Why do people volunteer —Determinants of volunteering	—Motivations and benefits —Dominant status model —Resource model —Theories of cross-national variation in volunteering
	Theory as a narrative: —How do people volunteer —The context of volunteering —Volunteering and social change	—Styles of volunteering —The volunteer process —The volunteer ecology —Volunteer management —The changing institutional and biographical embedding of volunteering
	Theory as enlightenment —Critical perspectives	—Issues of social inequality —Negative consequences of volunteering —Unmet expectations —Hidden ideologies

2.1.6 Management of Volunteers

Cuskelly (2004) conducted an Australian study to explain trends in volunteer participation and retention using continuity theory (Atchley, 1989, 1999). Cuskelly *et al.* (2006) expanded this original research, finding that as there was an absence of literature surrounding evidence-based volunteer management practices, they used Human Resource Management (HRM) theory to research the impact of volunteer management practices on Community Sport Organisations on retention and organisational practices. Dempsey-Brench and Shantz (2022) discussed how

strategic approaches to the use of HRM with volunteers is required. Costa *et al.* (2006) found that volunteering is becoming an increasingly competitive market, not just within sport, and this is supported by Cho, Wong and Chiu, (2020, p.8) who found that 'volunteer management positively affected volunteers' intention to continue volunteering through job satisfaction'. As a result, sporting organisations at all levels must identify the factors that make their volunteer experience attractive. Since the New Labour Government there has been an increasing pressure to professionalise operations in line with the private sector (Nichols *et al.,* 2005; Nichols and Shepherd, 2006; Byers, 2013) and to deliver government objectives effectively, amateur sports clubs need appropriate management practices in place to support volunteers (May, Harris and Collins, 2013). In smaller clubs, a few individuals do the majority of the operational and management work; therefore, the volunteers' values influence the club's management practices (Shibli *et al.,* 1999; Byers, 2013). Further issues arising from the literature are the barriers inhibiting clubs from using effective management practices, and the skills required of those few who take responsibility for managing volunteers (Cuskelly *et al.*, 2006). From another perspective, Cuskelly *et al.* (2006) also believe that the management practices and culture of clubs that experience high levels of volunteer turnover need further examination. Cuskelly (2008) further concluded that community sport and its volunteers around the world are under-researched, compared to those who are full-time employed in professional elite sport.

Peachey *et al.* (2014, p.1066) identified that it would be useful to conduct research into volunteer motivations and retention in particular 'attracting and retaining volunteers, and the potential outcomes of volunteer retention or withdrawal (such as increased or decreased organizational performance)'. Several researchers for example, Pearce (1993), Shibli *et al.* (1999), Kirk and MacPhail (2003), and Friederici and Heinemann (2007) concluded that many clubs operate with very informal social structures as opposed to having rigid bureaucratic rules and procedures. Byers' (2013) research analysed elements of control from a critical realist perspective, finding that control mechanisms in the form of management or contextual controls are under-researched in the voluntary sector. Byers went on to debate why management control in community sport has had so little focus in the literature despite contributing to society socially and economically (Kendall, 2013). Byers (2013) identified that there are some limited studies,

which identified context of community sports clubs, and how work is distributed amongst individuals. Byers (2013) concludes that it may be more important to look at the relationships between mechanisms of control, how these mechanisms are evolving, and how much conflict arises between club tradition and history and increasing pressure from society and government to formalise operations.

Slack and Parent (2006), in their analysis of the main elements of organisational structure in sport organisations, identified centralisation as an important aspect. They argue that there is some debate as to how the term can be defined, but broadly speaking, they characterise a centralised organisation as one where most decisions are made at the top level of the organisation's hierarchy. Equally, in a decentralised organisation, many decisions are delegated to lower levels of the hierarchy (Østerlund, 2012). In contrast, Aisbett and Hoye's (2015) findings indicated that the perceived level of organisational support (POS) or the perceived supervisor support (PSS) could contribute to volunteers' satisfaction, hence the retention of volunteers, therefore an understanding of the management processes and systems should improve and inform the levels of organisational or supervisory support. Østerlund (2012), in a thorough review of the literature, also found that most volunteering studies to date have only investigated management practices to a limited degree. However, Wicker and Hallman (2013) support that while the volunteer profile and motivations have been explored in depth, volunteering usually takes place in an organisational context. The conclusion that can be drawn from these researchers is that the characteristics and context of the organisation's volunteering takes place in is largely neglected in previous research.

Schlesinger, Egli and Nagel (2013) found that volunteers have job satisfaction if their expectations are met, but if the volunteers have unpleasant working conditions within the community sports club, they are more likely to experience dissatisfaction, and that the more satisfied a volunteer was the less likely they would terminate their position. This study also found that in a volunteer marketplace that is becoming increasingly service and growth oriented, that ties between the club and the volunteer may be weakened and erode the feelings of obligation (Nagel, 2006). VSCs struggle to find and retain volunteers as well as being increasingly difficult to recruit members into volunteering roles, especially for roles that may demand more time or technical expertise

(Cuskelly, Hoye and Auld, 2006; Breuer, 2011; Schlesinger, Klenk and Nagel, 2015). Kirk and MacPhail (2003) found that structures and practices within VSCs are influenced by the values of the volunteers who contribute to the running of the clubs. Shibli *et al*. (1999) also found that a large proportion of work in VSCs is done by a small number of individuals. As part of the modernisation agenda for NGBs, Grix (2009, p.41) researched the impact of UK sport policy on UK Athletics and found that roles previously filled by volunteers had moved to employees on paid salaries, and some volunteers felt that they were being treated as employees but without the salary.

There are many different methods of managing volunteer recruitment and retention (Schlesinger, Klenk and Nagel, 2015), and as political pressure and austerity/cost of living measures continue to be placed upon grassroots organisations to increase participation at all levels with minimal costs, an important research agenda will be how the community sport organisations in Table 1 understand and adapt their volunteer management process. Carvalho et al (2014, p.413), in their research on Portuguese non-profit organisations, found that like the voluntary sector in the UK, these organisations often suffered from a shortage of resources needed to 'understand whether these practices are implemented at all, especially when resources and skills are lacking, what alternative strategies organisations use and what consequences emerge'.

Schlesinger, Klenk and Nagel (2015) conducted a study into the decision-making processes on recruiting volunteers in sports clubs, which identified that a more streamlined approach is required when it comes to identifying and recruiting volunteer roles. However, recruitment practices should not be oriented to corporate personnel practices, as the nature of sport and volunteering is more fluid and requires more flexibility. The researchers of this article though have agreed that this research is merely a starting point and that there is a strong need for further research into recruitment practices and decision-making. Nichols et al (2019) confirmed that previous research (Taylor et al. 2003; Groom et al 2014) in England had found the recruitment of volunteers is particularly problematic especially recruiting for committee roles.

This ties in with the research from Brudney *et al.* (2019), who developed a volunteer stewardship framework (Table 1) as a way for the volunteer organisation to understand and tap into the

relevant volunteer energy or motivations. The different models represent the different types of organisations who may be involved in volunteering and volunteers in those models might differ.

Table 1: Volunteer Stewardship Framework (Brudney *et al.*, 2019, p.71)

		Access to volunteer energy	
		Private resource	**Common pool**
Guidance of volunteers	**Unitary**	Membership model Examples: Membership association, self-help group	Service model Examples: Volunteer service-delivery program in a nonprofit organization or government agency
	Shared	Secondary model Examples: Corporate volunteer program, school-based volunteer program	Intermediary model Examples: Volunteer center, "voluntourism" agency

Arnon, Almog-Bar and Cnaan (2022, p.1) introduced the concept of 'engageability', creating a conceptual framework for organisations to review how well they engage with volunteers and where improvements can be made. After reviewing the literature, they created four clusters of organisational practice '(a) value based (ideological), (b) managerial, (c) physical, and (d) supportive connections' (ibid, p.3) (see Table 2 below). The supportive connection cluster demonstrates the collaborative nature of volunteering and how relationships with external organisations within the landscape are needed to build supportive connections.

Table 2: Organisation Volunteer Clusters (Arnon, Almog-Bar and Cnaan, 2022, p.1649)

Value-based (ideological) cluster	Managerial cluster	Physical cluster	Supportive-connection cluster
Values that underlie the organization's decision to integrate volunteers	Paid volunteer manager: job scope, organizational placement, and training	Dedicated budget for managing, nurturing, and rewarding volunteers	Supportive connections with similar volunteer organizations
Organizational culture toward volunteers	Volunteer management practices	Liability insurance	Supportive connections with umbrella organizations and volunteer centers
Integrating volunteering into the organization's vision statement and strategic plan	Management of staff and volunteer relations	Reimbursement system for volunteers	Supportive connections with "third-party model" organizations
Centrality of volunteering in the organization	Making volunteering more flexible and enhancing diversity	Technological tools	Platforms for peer-learning among volunteer managers
		Suitable physical space for volunteers	
		Marketing tools	

Coyne and Coyne Snr (2001) believe that a number of key issues are important when recruiting event volunteers: - 1. The event – how high profile is it? 2. The sponsor, 3. Reputation of event and sponsor. 4. Reputation of the sponsor with previous years' volunteers, 5. Size of the event. Coyne and Coyne Snr (2001) believe that understanding the answers to these questions will help determine where the volunteers will be found and what type of incentive package to offer.

There are limited studies that have explored the relationship between provider and volunteer (Wicker and Hallman, 2013; Wicker, 2017; Wegner, Jones and Jordan, 2019), and yet this research has shown that organisations can heavily influence the volunteer experience. Wegner, Jones and Jordan (2019, p.639) found that alongside HRM elements there must also be 'identity management strategies that provide sensegiving cues' finding that this process helped the organisations support the volunteers to develop organisational identities. The Sport and Recreation Alliance also conducted research to produce a framework which helped organisations to release the potential of volunteers. The acronym GIVERS was developed from this behavioural science-led research, G – Growth, I – Impact, V – Voice, E – Experience, R- Recognition, S- Social. The Voice element of this framework particular ties into the organisation/volunteer relationship with recommendations to ensure that relationships are built and developed.

Retention of volunteers was identified as an area of challenge by several academics (Breuer *et al.,* 2017; Nichols, 2017; Nagel *et al*., 2020). Wicker and Breuer (2013) found that many third sector and voluntary organisations including sports clubs suffered from low retention of volunteers. Mills *et al*. (2022, p.2231) found that there needs to be an element of flexibility, as 'the role that volunteers play is subject to change though as the operating environment changes'. Retention of experienced and qualified volunteers who are willing to take on board positions was seen to be especially challenging (Nichols, 2017). The modernisation and formalisation of the volunteer management processes should have a positive impact in how organisations treat volunteers and therefore should improve volunteer satisfaction (Nagel *et al.,* 2020). For example, *Park Run* ensure that they recognise and thank volunteers at the start of each event to make all runners aware that the event could not run without the support from volunteers (Nichols et al, 2019).

2.1.6 Improvements through the Use of Information Technology and Social Media systems in Volunteering

Dunleavy *et al.* (2005, p.478) commented that 'a whole complex of changes, which have IT and information-handling changes at their centre' signified we had entered a period of digital-era governance. These shifts have also been felt in sport and volunteering. Grix (2009, p.33) reflected that 'technological and social changes since the 1960s have been fundamental'. In more recent research Heley (2022, p.77) found that technology played a role in facilitating conversations about volunteering and was useful for 'both encouraging and providing new means through which individuals can give their time and expertise to good causes'.

There has been an emergence of Volunteer Management Systems (VMS), which try to support volunteering processes (Schönböck *et al.,* 2016). Initial research in this area has highlighted that there does need to be further studies from an end user perspective in ease of use of the systems and motivations to use an online system to support volunteering (Schönböck *et al.*, 2016). These systems also need to ensure open access, so that the volunteer portal data can be freely available online so volunteer portals can freely share data leading to improved discoverability and data consolidation (GM Workforce Hub, 2024). The VMS systems can also add in level of motivation and reward through the logging of hours and adding badges that cab be gained at certain points. Finkelstein (2008) discussed how developing a sense of belonging through technology could become a motivator to continue volunteering. Nacke and Deterding (2017, p. 450) found that the literature is growing in terms of gamification research and that the emphasis on milestones reflects a level of 'gamification': 'the use of play, games and game-inspired design to improve the human condition'. This was also supported by Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa's (2014) where volunteers are motivated by gamification. These VMS may also lead to volunteer passports where an individual can electronically transfer their credentials for volunteering between organisations (Wales Council for Voluntary Action, 2021; Liddle, 2021). There is little academic literature surrounding volunteer passports, but the concept of volunteer passports has widely been debated in various volunteering organisations. DCMS produced a report in 2021 *Volunteer Passporting Research* which found there were perceived benefits and demand for volunteer

passports with some organisations using variations of them locally. There were some issues identified such as open access data to ensure transferability between events and organisations.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has been growth in the use of social media, online activity such as online training courses, and growth of online club activity. Sterling Volunteers (2020 p.25) research found '90% of volunteers prefer digital communications over paper' whereas LaChance's (2021) research found that alongside the increase in social media to support virtual volunteering there were now opportunities for volunteers to volunteer in social media. There is some research though that demonstrates that there is still a digital divide (Piatak, Dietz and McKeever, 2019). Social Lens (2021) found that 'the *Search Volume Index* graph of the subject 'Virtual Volunteering' on the Google Trends website offers an interesting insight; it displays consistent fluctuations in the number of subject based search queries between 2016-20, followed by an immediate, steep rise in civic interest around virtual volunteering opportunities in the wake of the worldwide lockdown that was announced during March 2020'.

2.2 Historical Context

This section of Chapter Two will now review the historical context of sport and volunteering policy as a way to understand policy developments, and how the relationship between the state and the sport and volunteering sector has developed over time. In 1912 Webb and Webb offered two alternative metaphors for the relationship between the state and the voluntary sector: one metaphor as a set of parallel bars, whereby each sector could offer the same services but to segments of the population; the other metaphor was a ladder where the voluntary sector acts as an extension 'building on the base of a guarantee of state provided services' (Rees and Mullins (Eds), 2017, p.28). Davis Smith (1995) debated that the ladder model was used as the impetus for the next phase of welfare state reforms during the 1940s. Kendall and Knapp (1996) reported how the history of the UK voluntary sector was one of gradual secularisation, formalisation of voluntary action, and how the sector changed roles in relation to the state.

There are some historical developments pre-1957, a decision was taken to discuss some of the older history at the start of this chapter that had an impact on sport and volunteering, and it could be argued that since the 18th century there has been a political angle to sport/physical

activity and volunteering. This section is also to provide context of the strategic direction for sport in England. As can be seen in Table 3 (chronicling PM/Party in Power and Notable Policy Developments from 1960 onwards) there has been a wide and varied approach to sport and volunteering by successive governments, mainly depending on the level of interest from the Prime Minister of the day (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012). Each of these periods will be examined for notable policy which impacted on the development of sport and sports volunteering. The last section of this chapter will define volunteering, the typology and antecedents of volunteers and the management of volunteers.

Table 3: Policy changes and Eras of UK Government

Time Period	PM/Party in Power	Notable Sports Policy Developments	Notable Volunteering Policy Developments
1957-1979	Harold Macmillan (1957-1963) Conservative	1957-1960 - Wolfenden Report *Sport and the Community*	
	Alec-Douglas Home (1963-1964) Conservative		
	Harold Wilson (1964-1970) Labour	1965 - Advisory Sports Council founded *1968 - Sport for All*	1969 - *Aves Report*
	Edward Heath (1970-1974) Conservative	*1972 - Sports Council rebrand*	
	Harold Wilson (1974-1976) Labour	1975 - Sports Aid Founded 1975 - Sport *and Recreation* White Paper	
	James Callaghan (1976-1979) Labour		
1979 – 1990	Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) Conservative	1982 - Action *for Sport* 1982 - *Sport in the Community – the next 10 years* 1983 - *National Coaching Foundation* 1985 - *Local Government Act – Abolishment of Metropolitan Councils*	

		1988 – Local Government Act – Introduction of CCT	
1990-1997	John Major (1990-1997) Conservative	1992 – *Department of National Heritage* established 1994 – *Youth Sports Trust* established 1994 – *UK National Lottery* 1995 – *Sport, Raising the Game* 1995 – Manchester Commonwealth Games Awarded 1996 – Sports Council rebranded to *English Sports Council*	1994-1997 - *Make a Difference* Strategy 1996 - *Millennium Volunteers*
1997 - 2010	Tony Blair (1997-2007) Labour	1997 - DNH renamed Department for *Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)* 1999 – English Sports Council rebranded *to Sport England* *1999 - 2000 County Sports Partnerships (CSP) established.* 2000 – *A Sporting Future for All* 2002 - *Game Plan* 2004 – *The National Framework for Community Sport in England*	1997 - Sport England's *Volunteer Investment Programme* 2000 – *A Sporting Future for All* 2002 - Manchester Commonwealth Games 2004 – Building on Success 2004 - *Change Up* Programme 2004 - *The Year of the Volunteer* 2005 – *The Russell Commission*

		2005 – *The Carter Report* 2005 – London 2012 Olympics Awarded	
	Gordon Brown (2007-2010)	20008-2011 - *Sport England Strategy* 2008 – *Whole Sport Plans* 2008 – PESSYP	2008 - *The Commission for the Future of Volunteering*
2010-2016	David Cameron/Nick Clegg (2010-2015) Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition David Cameron (2015-2016) Conservative	2010 - *Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR)* 2010 - CCPR rebranded as *Sport and Recreation Alliance* 2012 - *London Olympics* 2014 - *Everybody Active Every Day*	2010 - *The Big Society* 2011 – *European Year of Volunteering* 2012 - *London Olympics* 2013 - *Help to Work Scheme*
2016-Present Day	Theresa May (2016-2019) Conservative	2015 Sporting Future Policy 2016 – *Towards an Active Nation* *2017 – Playing to Win a new era for sport*	
	Boris Johnson (2019-2022) Conservative	2020 - *Covid19 – Global Pandemic* 2021 - *National Plan for Sport, Health, and Well-being* 2021 - *Sport and Recreation Alliance – Support. Recover. Achieve.* *2022 – Grassroots participation in sport and*	

		physical activity report	
	Liz Truss (Sept-Oct 22) Conservative	2022 – *Birmingham Commonwealth Games*	2022 - Birmingham Commonwealth Games
	Rishi Sunak (Oct 22 – Present) Conservative	2023 – Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity	

2.3 Eras of UK Government and Policy Developments

2.3.1 English Sports and Volunteering Policy Development Pre-1957

The Boer War in 1902 prompted a governmental review due to the physical deterioration of recruits to the Armed Forces (Fitzroy, 1904). This resulted in a post-Boer War school physical activity policy where sport was mainly based around physical activity to prepare for war (Marino, 2013). When the Carnegie College of Physical Education opened in 1933, as part of his opening speech, Lord Irwin, President of the Board of Education said, 'Physical Education is a vital factor in promoting our national educational aims – the development to the utmost of individual capacities and their use not for self alone but for service' (Marino, 2013, p.43). McCall (2021) reviewed the report and writes that whilst Fitzroy (1904) 'tends to blame the individual more than the state', the report ultimately led to positive social reforms and the birth of the Welfare State. This led to the introduction of pensions, minimum wages, and free school meals (Hay, 1987) under the Liberal Government which came into power during the period 1906-1914.

Before the 1930s very little interest was shown by the UK Government in sport. During the early decades of the twentieth century, governmental involvement in sport was limited with only ad-hoc action (Coghlan and Webb, 1990; Green and Houlihan, 2005). In 1935 the Central Council of Recreative Physical Training (CCRPT) was established as a private organisation established by Phyllis Coulson (McRae, 2010). There is little mention in the academic journals, yet Coulson was instrumental in driving CCPRT activity in the role as General Secretary. Her philosophy was to use state-funded voluntary organisations to push sport and recreation activities to the masses (Leonard, 1989). This organisation coordinated the work of voluntary bodies involved in providing physical education and recreation to school leavers. The 1937 Physical Recreation and Training Act was a conscious push to increase physical fitness through the National Fitness Campaign. A White Paper on Physical Training and Recreation was published in early 1937 to propose centralising and coordinating the various voluntary and other organisations and following this a National Advisory Council for England was created which included a Grants Committee. The response from Labour MP Aneurin Bevan to this White Paper proposal was that it was going to be significantly cheaper for the government than investing in facilities and playing fields for the lower classes (Henry, 1993).

There was little progress on sport or physical activity policy during the two world war periods

but during the post-war period ministerial support emerged. Support from ministers for the 1948 Olympic Games was primarily as way to recover from World War Two (McCree, 2016). The bid from the Lord Mayor 'included the claim that the invitation had the 'full approval' of the British government' (Beck, 2008, p.621). During the 1940s the CCRPT was rebranded the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR). The rebranded organisation went on to establish seven National Recreation Centres (National Sports Centres) to provide facilities for elite competition, training, and coaching (Coghlan and Webb, 1990) which still exist today under either the Sports Council Trust or through local council ownership (Birch, 2015). During the 1950s successive Conservative governments mostly maintained a hands-off approach, likely due to the economic pressures and the stop-go Butler squeeze in place at this time (Hood and Himaz, 2017).

Volunteering and volunteers became deeply involved in many aspects of the welfare state post-World War Two, as although the welfare state was introduced, the assumed need for volunteering and volunteers did not decrease (Howlett, 2008). The Beveridge Report (1942) proposed a complete sea change of the state welfare system, therefore negating the need for voluntary or non-state provision. Nichols, Reid and Findley-King (2023) commented that the Beveridge report included mutual aid resulting from individuals creating solutions to their own needs, rather than wealthy philanthropists making decisions for them. The report did recognise that voluntary action was important for health and the wider welfare state, and 'their ability to form a bridge between the state and the community and their flexibility to respond to new social needs and promote new services which could be incorporated into universal state provision (Hemings, 2013, p.96). The Beveridge Report (1942) alongside Keynes' (1936) economics was credited with the creation of the welfare state and went on to form part of the post-war consensus (Addison, 1994; Lowe, 1990).

2.3.2 1957-1979 Conservative and Labour Governments

The post-war consensus continued into this period with investment in a wide range of public services financed through progressive taxation, a pledge to full employment, a mixed economy, close work with unions (Williamson, 2016) and a retreat from the Empire to the European Economic Community (EEC) (Kavanagh and Morris, 1994). During this early period Sir John Wolfenden led an enquiry from 1957-1960 to investigate how sport in Britain could be developed, and to recommend actions for the statutory and voluntary bodies involved

with sport at that time. The Wolfenden Report *Sport and the Community* was published in 1960 with recommendations and analysis identifying issues such as the gap in provision between school sports and adult clubs. The report called for a range of state initiatives to enhance 'sport in the community'. The Committee focused on facility development and the role Voluntary Sports Clubs (VSCs) could play in the provision of sport. The Committee was able to force decisions on changing sport structurally in Britain by recommending an expansion of sport and increased support from the state to reduce delinquent youth behaviour (Coghlan and Webb, 1990; Houlihan, 1997b). On the recommendation of the Wolfenden Report an Advisory Sports Council (ASC) (an arms-length government organisation) was created to advise the Government on 'matters relating to the development of amateur sport and physical recreation services and to foster cooperation among the statutory authorities and voluntary organisations concerned' (Howell, 1965). According to Coghlan and Webb (1990) the Sports Council prioritised two issues 'the need for facilities and the need for a stronger injection of public funds into the administration and development of the national governing bodies' (Coghlan and Webb, 1990, p.20). The Sports Council also then went to garner approval for Regional Sports Councils. There is consensus in the literature that the creation of these more regional operations changed the face of sport (Coghlan and Webb, 1990; Houlihan, 1997b). Alongside the developments of grassroots level sport there was also increased interest in elite level competition, with prime minister Harold Wilson becoming more aware that sport may be an election issue, and instrumented support for the 1966 World Cup to be held in England (Jefferys, 2012).

In the 1960s volunteering was seen as a way of diverting youthful energy away from Mods-and-Rockers gang feuds (Brindle, 2015). There was also a growing sense of disillusionment with public services. It was at this time that an agency was created to support volunteering. This became Volunteering England and the need for such an agency was highlighted in the Aves Report (1969). The Aves Report was commissioned to report on volunteering in social services, but the recommendations led to the creation of the wider Volunteering England and is seen as a key event in the development of volunteering infrastructure in the UK (Brewis and Finnegan, 2012).

In the late 1960s the ASC, influenced by The Council of Europe's idea that 'everyone regardless of age, colour or capability, has the opportunity to participate' (Carver, 2015) created a 'Sport

for All' campaign, that showed elite sport had as much place as grassroots community sport. In 1974 Dennis Howell was elected Minister of State for Sport and Recreation, giving sport ministerial status for the first time (King, 2009). Howell's vested interest in sport meant he went on to set up Sports Aid in 1976 ahead of the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games to support athletes who would not be funded by the government (Sports Aid, 2022).

The ASC rebranded in the early 1970s to become the Great Britain (GB) Sports Council and given executive powers by the Conservative Government, demonstrating the intention to widen the organisation's responsibilities. The Sports Council campaigned for a Department for Sports and Tourism but the government at the time rejected these calls and sport remained under the purview of the Office of Arts and Libraries. This was a shift towards more central government-controlled intervention and away from a more *voluntarist* approach to sport seen in previous decades (Roche, 1993; Green, 2007; Henry, 2010). Sport and recreation was first mentioned within policy documentation as part of the welfare state (Houlihan, 1997a) but as the decade progressed the mass participation policy of 'Sport for All' was suffering implementation difficulties and facing significant challenges. Sport for All had become little more than a slogan. Programmes and initiatives were refocused to target 'disadvantaged groups' such as young people, ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities and those in lower socio-economic groups (Houlihan, 1991; Green, 2007; Henry, 2010). Houlihan (1991, p.99) discussed that Sport for All had lost the original focus and had developed into 'Sport for the Disadvantaged', and that elite sport policy was being neglected. The White Paper *Sport and Recreation* was published in 1975 by the then Labour Government where recreation was identified as essential to meeting community needs becoming part of the fabric of wider social services (Henry, 2010, p.16). Green (2007) and Henry (2010) both commented on the juxtaposition of this focus on sport and recreation against a backdrop of economic issues and growing unrest and unemployment.

2.3.2 1979-1990 Thatcher Conservative Government

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. The 1980s was a period of change and unrest, with a process of de-industrialisation, mass unemployment and proposals to reform the trade unions (Marsh, 1995). Thatcher rejected the post-war consensus and placed great importance on a free-market society, frequently stating 'there is no alternative' (Moncrieff, 2013), and the desire to have minimal state intervention was a key aspects of her ideology to

reduce public spending, increase private provision rather than public as a way of increasing consumer choice (Parkinson, 1989). According to Domeneghetti (2023) Thatcher's attitudes towards the welfare state, labour relations, the economy, race, and sexuality were all infused with this philosophy. Houlihan and White (2002) wrote that the Thatcher-led government displayed little interest in sport, and the Secretary of State at the time Nicolas Ridley shared Thatcher's lack of interest in sport with several sport and recreation policies being challenged by the new government. Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) described Thatcher's societal view as 'atomistic', using sport for self-interest through photograph opportunities.

If sport did register at all with Thatcher it was in mainly negative terms such as the ongoing football hooliganism and stadium safety (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012). In 1982 the *Action for Sport* programme was established as a solution to social unrest and urban riots in inner cities (Bloyce and Smith, 2009). This programme provided Local Authorities with £1million per year for inner city sports development projects (Coalter, 2007; Bloyce and Smith, 2009). In 1982 the Sports Council published a strategy document *Sport in the Community, The Next 10 Years,* which was to focus on widening participation among inner city young people in a bid to overcome urban social inequalities (Collins and Kay, 2014). The document posited that 'not to tackle the needs of these groups would put the Council in breach of its Royal Charter' (Sports Council, 1982, p.7). There were some moves to professionalise voluntary organisations as the government took control of the services and activities offered by the voluntary sector in a bid to support social services (Brewis 2013; Brindle, 2015). In 1983 the National Coaching Foundation (now Sports Coach UK) was set up by the Sports Council with the intention of organising coaching in all sports, signalling a move towards professionalism for the coaching industry and away from a wholly volunteer focus (Green and Houlihan, 2005). During the late 1970s and 80s the Thatcher government viewed volunteering mainly as a response to the unemployment and civil unrest that inner cities were facing. During the latter part of Thatcher's government, Colin Moynihan was the Minister of Sport from 1987-1990, and in response to outbreaks of hooliganism proposed a National ID card scheme through the Football Spectators Act 1989. This was being used to bolster the Conservative Government's stance as being tough on crime by excluding hooligans from football grounds (Giulianotti, 2004; Stott and Pearson, 2008), although these plans were eventually abandoned following the Hillsborough disaster and the subsequent Taylor Report.

By the mid-1980s sport public policy was back on the government's agenda and yet, was more reactive than strategic with the policy/strategy reacting to increased football hooliganism and social unrest (Houlihan, 1997a). The *Action for Sport* programme was also starting to be seen to have some faults. Bloyce and Smith (2009) describe how sports development workers tended to emphasise the social benefits to participating in sport to protect their funding. It was also the first time that targets for increasing participation were set as a central objective for any new proposals to tackle wider social issues (Collins, 2008). This era saw a movement away from the thinking that leisure was an integral part of citizenship, and in combination with Thatcher's market-led policies resulted in a response from the leisure services becoming more market oriented (Nichols and Taylor, 1995; Findlay-King *et al*., 2018). The Thatcher government was becoming more interested in how money was being spent by Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) such as the Sports Councils, and therefore there was greater need to justify the wider social goals that could be met via providing sport and recreation programmes (Collins, 2008). The Sports Minister at the time, Neil Macfarlane, wanted tighter control and accountability on sports affairs and stated 'if public funds are used to finance sporting activities, isn't it proper that politicians should make political decisions affecting these funds? After all they are accountable' (Macfarlane; quoted in Coghlan and Webb, 1990, pp.57–58). Houlihan and Lindsey (2012, p.2) describe British sport in the late 1980s as 'a largely neglected backwater of public policy', with many school playing fields lost as part of new housing build projects (Collins and Kay, 2014). Criticisms were being levelled towards Local Authorities that they 'were at best commercially naïve, and at worst inept' (Christophers, 2019, p. 582) therefore there was a need to control local spending, however this seems to have been a myth touted by those who wanted the public sector to implement private sector policies.

The Local Government Act 1985 abolished metropolitan councils including the Greater Manchester Council (GMC). This coincided with a broader government policy of privatisation and marketisation. The government therefore went on to introduce the Local Government Act in 1988 which meant that local government services were put out to tender through the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). The CCT process allowed for costs to be allocated to public leisure provision in which local services could still tender for the contract but there was a perception that costs would be reduced, and efficiency promoted.

Due to this development private sector organisations and leisure trusts began to come forward and bid for these leisure services contracts (Nichols and Taylor, 1995; Findlay-King *et al*., 2018). As these services began to be outsourced to private-sector companies, there was a move by managers within sports and leisure provision to use more practices from the private sector such as marketing, minimum service levels and deficit minimisation, leading users accessing sport and leisure facilities and services to move from citizens to consumers (Coalter, 1995; Nichols and Taylor, 1995; King, 2013). Modernisation at this point marked the start of the process of embedding a contract culture in government relations with service delivery agents, Local Authorities, NGBs and VSCs (Bloyce and Smith, 2009). Coalter (2007, p.12) quotes the Audit Commission in his research, stating that 'many authorities do not have a clear idea of what their role in sport and recreation should be'. At the time the Audit Commission felt that there was an unacceptable level of monitoring, evaluation, and accountability, leisure services (and facilities) were not statutory services at the time and there was very little monitoring of participation or use (Bloyce and Smith, 2009).

2.3.3 Major Conservative Government 1990-1997

Prior to the 1990s, sport was considered a policy sub-sector (Coalter, 2007; Grix, 2009; Adams, 2014). The result was a sector area which was 'under-resourced, lacking in strategic leadership and on the margin of the government's agenda' according to Houlihan and Lindsey (2012, p.2). During the 1990s a change in the Conservative Government with the leadership of John Major saw a more personal interest in sport with 'financial investment, administrative reform and strategy development' (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012, p.7). Major had a much stronger interest in sport than his predecessor and realised that the nation's love of sport could become an election issue (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012). This investment however was not explicit to sport, and the level of investment and structural change was seen across most areas of public policy (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012, p.5).

During 1992 the Department of National Heritage (DNH) was established with control of sport taking over from the Department of Environment (DoE) who had been responsible for sport since the 1970s. John Major had a personal interest in school sport (particularly competitive team sports) and therefore competitive team sports were high on the government agenda. Major, along with several other key politicians and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), were instrumental in shaping policy changes in school sport and PE (Houlihan and

Green, 2006). The Youth Sports Trust (YST) was introduced in 1994 to encourage all children to have a healthy lifestyle, was set up as charitable trust and therefore was not dependent on the state for funding.

In 1994 Major's government established the UK National Lottery. The Big Lottery Fund and Health Lottery Fund had a significant impact on the not-for-profit/voluntary/third sector, as a percentage of the revenue was to be distributed amongst 'good causes', of which sport was included. This move also gave government control over the delivery agents for these 'good causes'. The policy document *Sport, Raising the Game* which was published in 1995 had a focus on the positive social and moral benefits sport could have on children and young people (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012). School and elite sport featured heavily in this strategy, with an eye on the fact that there was a perception that international success led to greater national identity and social cohesion. However, despite Major's interests and the increase in school sport, spending and funding streams for elite athletes made no difference to GB's performance in the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games, with the team placing 35th (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012).

2.3.4 Blair/Brown – New Labour Government 1997-2010

In the late 1990s when New Labour came to power there were further developments to set and audit sport policy objectives, and an increase in the use of business models within the not-for-profit community sport sector (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012). During this period sport was seen by several leading politicians as a source of social capital and national pride (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012) and yet the new government produced a variety of strategic and policy documents focused more on community sport and sports development (DCMS, 2000; DCMS, 2002; Houlihan and White, 2002). National Governing Bodies (NGBs) were still maintaining a high level of independence and were able to take advantage of ministerial streams of funding through the introduction of Whole Sport Plans (WSP) in 2002 (Collins, 2010). Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) suggested that the not-for-profit sport sector's relationship with government moved through several phases, and funding had increasingly become based on a conditional business model, with outcomes being evaluated much closer than in the past. Chelladurai (1999, 2006) found that organisations involved in sport had to adapt, change focus, and become more business-like in how they were managing their people (including volunteers). This led to several tensions, which needed to be managed, by the clubs

and NGBs working in the not-for-profit sector. With the government setting policy objectives, resourcing to fulfil these objectives needed to be met by the not-for-profit/voluntary sector.

The late 1990s under the New Labour government saw a project of modernisation within the social and public policy arena. According to Adams (2014, p.551), 'modernisation has sought to recognise, reshape, and reorder sport participation in line with utilitarian values'. In a previous paper Adams (2011, p.24) commented that New Labour's policies and their 'hybrid conception of the activated citizen (Johansson and Hvinden, 2005) has been an integral element within this process, and in the context of volunteerism provides opportunities to transform citizens beyond any commitment to paid work (Lister, 2002; Clarke, 2005).' Sam, Andrew and Gee (2019; p. 280) commented that the modernisation agenda includes components that result in a 'more efficient, democratic and integrated operations while also advancing a suite of structural reforms such as standardised practices and performance management initiatives'. They also discuss how democratic principles similar to collaborative governance principles, such as trust, and decentralisation can be an integral part of modernisation.

In 1996 an amended Royal Charter decreed The English Sports Council, which was then rebranded in 1999 to become Sport England. The Millennium Volunteers programme was introduced in 1996. This was a programme for young people designed to encourage sustained volunteering and to gain experience for employability (Smith *et al.,* 2002). According to Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) New Labour were keen to use Sport England to modernise reform through *Game Plan* which was released in 2002. The Game Plan policy shone a spotlight on how there was a need for reform, especially a review of the structures relating to accountability and efficiency. This government were keen to change the amateur volunteering culture of NGBs and VSCs to have a more accountable culture. Alongside a growing level of investment in sport, there was increased intervention in sport policy to modernise sports organisations (Collins, 2010). This placed further pressure on the voluntary sector to provide sports participation and pathway opportunities, resulting in a formalisation of procedures which then impacted on the recruitment and retention of volunteers (Nicholls *et al.,* 2005). This policy also highlighted the role of volunteers in sport and set a better emphasis on capacity building (DCMS, 2000). *Game Plan* was significant, because as well as focusing on mass participation, elite sport and staging of mega events, for the first time there

would be targets to improve participation and physical activity levels. The later policy *'A sporting future for all'* was also significant, in that volunteering was highlighted on the social agenda, and Sport England became responsible for volunteering and volunteer management (DCMS, 2002). The benefits of sport and volunteering were advocated throughout the New Labour period as a way to reduce inequalities, and through the concept of active citizenship as way to build social capital and enhance social mobility (Nicholson, Hoye and Houlihan, 2011; Morgan, 2013). It can be seen in later sections in the chapter that this policy rhetoric continues into successive governments.

By the early 2000s direct Treasury funding doubled, ensuring school sport funding was much improved with the two-hour PE offer taken up by a higher proportion of schools and the creation of 450 School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) to reverse the decline in school sport and become the start of pathways to clubs and elite level sport (Keech and Nauright, 2016). According to Houlihan and White (2002) the sector was seen to be playing a leading role in the delivery of policy objectives especially at a community sport/grassroots level. There was now a clear delineation for Sport England to concentrate on grassroots sport, UK Sport for elite levels and Youth Sports Trust for school sports. There was also better integration between all three organisations to become more cohesive whilst also allowing for stronger pathways from grassroots to governmental policy makers, and to allow for formal targets in the form of performance indicators to be set at each stage on the pathway (Nicholls *et al.,* 2005). These were enabled through Sport England policy documents such as *The delivery system for Sport in England* (2007a) and *Community Sports Networks, Implementation, and Investment Guidance* (2007b). In 2008 Sport England identified NGBs as the primary partners for the delivery of strategies and initiatives designed to increase participation. Geddes and Shand (2012, p.402) commented that partnerships 'have the potential to encourage commitment from non-government resources.' VSCs and other wider sport organisations were operating within a broader sports landscape which was fragmented and resource-poor, with the consequence that they were routinely excluded from policy debates. In 2010 the CCPR rebranded as the Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA), which is independent from government but is seen as the voice of NGBs and ensures their views are represented at a governmental level (Tacon, 2018 in Hasson, 2018 (Eds)). NGBs had previously had a high degree of autonomy from the state but there was now an expectation was that NGBs and

VSCs would play an important role in helping to deliver policy objectives through more competitive *Whole Sport Plans* (Sport England, 2012).

Under Prime Minister Tony Blair's leadership there developed an understanding that sport could be used to deliver wider policy goals such as health and crime and could promote social cohesion. Blair, in a speech to Olympians, stated that sport was 'a pro-education policy, a pro-health policy, an anti-crime and anti-drugs policy' (Blair, 2011). New Labour had clear intentions to push partnership working through policy decisions. During late 2007 there was a clear message from James Purnell, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, rejecting any previous sports policy, and declaring that sports organisations needed to rethink their policies and concentrate on developing sport pathways and increasing participation. Keech and Nauright (2016, p.8) comment that 'in many ways, Purnell's announcement refuted much of the National Framework, asking sporting organisations to refocus on sport for sport's sake'. Towards the middle of the decade under Blair's administration, the team bidding for the 2012 Olympic Games to be held in London found out the bid had won, meaning that by the end of the 2010s sport was 'being promoted by several senior politicians as a source of social capital and national pride' (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2012, p.2). As part of London 2012 a pre-volunteer programme was designed, built on the work of the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth Games Pre-Volunteer Programme (PVP). The 2002 PVP aimed to convert long-term unemployed locals into training and development which could lead to interview as a Games Volunteer, but also into paid work in the City Region (Nichols and Ralston, 2011). This London scheme was part of the employment and skills legacy driven by Blair's skills agenda (Greater London Authority, 2007).

In the later years of the New Labour Government 2007-2008, a financial crash caused the global financial crisis, resulting in the UK officially being in an economic recession. The response from the government was to enter a period of austerity through a pullback of public spending (Blyth 2013, Parnell *et al.*, 2018) resulting in a withdrawal of public funds on sport and leisure services and a wide-ranging impact on community and voluntary third sector provision of sport. The Active People Survey (APS) run by Sport England in the period 2008/2009 showed that the recession had a significant impact on the level of sports participation. Widdop *et al.* (2017) used the APS data to understand participation in hard-to-reach groups during the period of austerity, finding that any policy decisions to widen

participation had very little impact during this period.

2.3.5 The Coalition Government 2010-2015

Almost immediately on the Coalition Government of Conservative leader David Cameron and Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg taking office, the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in the autumn of 2010 was announced in response to wider economic downturns. This led to a contraction of funding for public services, and these spending cuts meant that progress made in sports policy for participation were halted. This period also resulted in an upturn of 'commissioning' where councils began to purchase sport and leisure/recreation activity from private and third sector organisations (King, 2013).

The Coalition Government was keen to protect support for London 2012, as Cameron believed the benefits of hosting the 2012 Games outweighed the costs, and therefore the games budget and funding for Olympic athletes was protected (Widdop *et al.,* 2017). As mentioned earlier there was an employment and skills legacy for London 2012 PVP. *Sports Makers* was a Sport England (2011) policy initiative from 2011-2013 before, during and after London 2012 to recruit train and deploy 40,000 new adult volunteers into sport and to be fully inclusive. Unfortunately, the legacy of a post-Games volunteer database comparable to the one developed after the legacy of the 2002 Commonwealth Games never came to fruition. Instead, several organisations (Sport England, Join In, NGBs, County Sports Partnerships and Local Authorities) each had their own database of volunteers trying to implement volunteering policy as part of the legacy from London 2012.

Between 2014-2018 swathing cuts of 20% in expenditure were announced. Cameron stated at the time "that there was a need for 'a leaner, more efficient state' in which 'we need to do more with less. Not just now, but permanently'' (Widdop *et al*., 2017, p.3). Hayton and Walker (2018, p.1) comment that cuts to public spending of 51% resulted in a period of 'super austerity'. These cuts led the then Education Secretary Michael Gove to scrap funding for the 450 School Sport Partnerships. There was a minor reprieve after protestations from Olympians, teachers and the press, with a commitment to protect the schools' Olympics (School Sports Games) events (Jeffreys, 2012). Community sport also suffered from the austerity cuts (Widdop *et al*., 2017) and following the Olympic Games, UK public expenditure cuts deepened. The DCMS had cuts of 24% in the period up to 2015 (National Audit Office, 2016). This also included a 33% cut in funding for Sport England, yet sports participation

targets were for a million more people to be taking part in sport (Sport England, 2008). These austerity measures ensured that sport and volunteers had to deal with shifts in policy and practice and achieve higher targets to meet wider social goals (Taylor, Panagouleas and Nichols, 2012). One worrying element from the budget cuts and failure of the Big Society was that the UK could end up with not enough volunteers to support community activity (Pattie and Johnson, 2011).

Storr and Spaaij (2016, p.1) discuss how 'Volunteering [was] a cornerstone of the UK's Coalition government policy rhetoric'. Cameron championed volunteering both as a contribution to developing local communities and as a civic duty (Ibid, Cabinet Office, 2010). Active Citizenship, which had been developed under the New Labour Government, was an Instrumental tool which then developed into Big Society. The Big Society (Cabinet Office, 2010) was introduced by Cameron in 2010, who explained 'his wish for community groups to run parks, post offices, libraries, and local transport services, and to influence housing developments' (Kisby, 2010, p.484). The idea was that four vanguard communities around England would support a range of activities with expertise from civil service organisations (Kisby, 2010), which was designed to increase the capacity of the voluntary or third sector, with volunteering to play a key role. The Big Society was in fact an attempt from the government to 'rollback the state and encourage citizens to take responsibility, via community and voluntary groups, for provision of public services at a local level' (Findlay-King *et al.* 2017, p.158). Geddes and Shand (2012, p.403) commented that 'changes to the governance map with the abolition of many non-departmental bodies and the refocusing on localism and voluntarism through the Big Society agenda, the agents that remain, in all likelihood in tandem with the private sector, are the new emphasis of governance'. However Big Society came under criticism from various sources with Tam (2011, p.33) stating that Big Society was 'a fig leaf for the Big Con to shrink public services permanently'. The policy failed to gather any momentum. Fenwick and Gibbon (2017, p.126) describe how 'the remit of a Big Society did not succeed or endure and was barely mentioned in the 2015 general election'. Although elements of the policy relating to the third sector have been seen to have had impact, Fenwick and Gibbon (2017, p.129) sum this up by describing the complexity of public policy provision, 'the Big Society was one passing response to an ever more complex system of public service'. In a move to improve health targets and tackle the £7.4million cost of

physical inactivity in 2014, Public Health England released the *Everybody Active Everyday* report. This started a process of moving towards a whole systems approach with health and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations involved in providing opportunities to get people moving (*Bird et al.,* 2022). Storr and Spaaij (2016, p.1) comment that at this time the term Active Citizenship became a 'public policy buzz phrase'. Morgan (2013, p.381) reaffirms this point discussing how the economic conditions and the focus on Big Society positioned volunteering as way for individuals 'to contribute to their communities and enhance their social capital'. The Big Society was unpopular and did not go on to be part of the 2015 election campaign, although the impact of the policy was felt as local services are consistently called on to deliver public services using volunteers, the voluntary and third sectors (Findlay-King *et al.*, 2017). The Localism Act (2011) was a policy to reduce the influence of the central state provided local authorities with greater freedom through devolved power and responsibility (King, 2014). The government also introduced further restrictions in local government finance and funding causing more austerity measures. Donald *et al.* (2014, p. 158) commented that these austerity measures were 'peculiarly local in nature' and Featherstone *et al.* (2012, p177) termed the increase in the use of volunteers due to a reduction in funding 'austerity localism'. As a way to achieve the required savings some public sector owned and run sport and leisure facilities used asset transfer into the hands of private organisations or in some cases community and volunteer groups who took on the running of these facilities. (Findlay-King *et al*., 2017, p.159).

2.3.5 2015-Present Day Conservative Government

In recent years with coalition and then Conservative governments regaining power there has been a continued reduction of services from local authorities, with NGBs and voluntary sport clubs left to become the primary partner for delivery of strategies and initiatives to increase participation (Wilding *et al.,* 2004; Taylor *et al.* 2007). The resources (people, facilities, and organisational capacity) to support community sport and local events are now sat more within VCSEs. The continued reduction in public expenditure ensured that all sport and recreation organisations, including National Governing Bodies (NGBs), have had to become more sustainable and efficient, having to do more with less. This also means that the trickle down on funding to community clubs has reduced (Houlihan and Green, 2009; Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2021; Mills *et al.*, 2022).

Early in Theresa May's premiership, Sport England released *Sporting Future Towards an Active Nation (2015)* which set to redefine what success looked like. Following Public Health England's 2015 report, this strategy moved away from focusing on how many people were playing formal sport, to trying to understand how active people are overall (Sport England, 2016). The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) *Sporting Future* (2015) policy focused on five social outcomes; 1) Physical Wellbeing, 2) Mental Wellbeing, 3) Individual Development, 4) Social and Community Development, and 5) Economic Development, in a clear move that sport was being expected to play a larger part in driving social outcomes.

Much of this period has also been taken up with a period of polycrisis (Toozer, 2022), Brexit, Covid-related policy and a cost-of-living crisis, so there is very little political activity relating to the development of sport and volunteering policy. Yet these events have had a significant impact on sports participation and sports events. During Boris Johnson's premiership in 2020, the agreement for Brexit was signed off and thus began an untangling of British and European regulations and law which is still ongoing (Weatherill in Kornbeck (Eds.), 2022). Literature in this area is mainly limited to legal articles, and as the ramifications of Brexit emerge so might more research. The biggest impact on sport and volunteering during this period has been the Covid-19 pandemic, which began in 2020. The global response prompted the almost total shutdown of competitive sport at all levels. The shutdown included multiple postponements of mega-events including the Olympic Games, the European Football Championship and the Rugby League World Cup. There were also league stoppages and cancellation of events in a range of sports (Giulianotti and Collison, 2020; Parnell *et al.*, 2020; Evans *et al.,* 2020). There were national and local lockdowns over the 2020 and 2021 periods, with well publicised disagreements between central government and regional metro Mayors (Shand *et al.* 2023) also having a lasting impact on organised community sport. There were opportunities for people to engage in physical activity outdoors (daily exercise), but the pandemic limited the ways to exercise and get involved with physical activity (Mann, 2020). There is however some evidence emerging that more people are aware of the importance of physical activity following the pandemic (Potts and McKenna, 2020). There was also a significant impact on volunteering with sport effectively halted in its tracks, as sports volunteers either retreated, moved to online activity, or were utilised in more public health/community response volunteering opportunities (Mackintosh *et al.*, 2021; Dederichs, 2022). Power and

Nedvestkaya (2022, p.2) commented that while the full impact of the pandemic on sports volunteering remains unknown, the 'impact upon the sector's volunteer workforce should be considered within the context of decline among those who volunteer in formal environments in the UK'. During this period Sport England, Active Partnerships, NGBs and various volunteering organisations produced reports and guidance through the roadmap, with each different stage and lockdowns (and local lockdowns) for how sport and volunteering could return (Stuart *et al.*, 2021; Sport and Recreation Alliance, 2021).

There are very few academic articles on the current cost-of-living crisis yet, but several organisations have written observations about the crisis from an economic or health perspective. Lyons (2023, p.5) defines the cost-of-living crisis as a 'real terms decrease in disposable income…as the cost of essential goods and services has accelerated beyond wage growth'. The consequences of this are that households will have less disposable income and savings, reducing the opportunity to spend on sport and physical activity.

During 2021 while Johnson was still in power, a Select Committee from the House of Lords introduced the *National Plan for Sport Health and Wellbeing*. The plan highlighted several areas for concern, particularly for participation rates amongst under-represented groups. The plan also made several recommendations, believing a new approach was needed within government to deliver and fund the plan. The committee commented on the evidence that 'cross-departmental coordination was not working, delivery is fragmented, and access to funding is complicated and overly bureaucratic. Grassroots sports clubs and groups, local authorities and other delivery bodies do amazing work, but it will take a much more concerted, whole systems approach to make substantive inroads in boosting activity rates and improving people's health and wellbeing' (House of Lords Select Committee, 2021). Following this, a number of funding opportunities were announced by the then Chancellor Rishi Sunak to fund facilities and various projects including some improvements to football facilities which would include contributions from the Football Association and Premier League (DCMS, 2022a). In October 2021, the then government and the Lawn Tennis Association announced that that it was committing over £30million to refurbish 4,500 public tennis courts in the 'most deprived' parts of the UK delivered by the LTA (DCMS, 2023a). In the same announcement, the government stated that it was providing £30million annually to improve the teaching of physical education at primary schools, and to open primary and secondary

school facilities during evenings, weekends, and school holidays.

In July 2022, there was a DCMS report titled *Grassroots participation in sport and physical activity*. The report was to review the progress of grassroots sport and physical activity, and whether value for money had been achieved in tackling the government's wider objectives such as Levelling Up and tackling obesity. The report concluded that there was mixed progress but that 'Multiple other central and local government bodies also have a role in encouraging physical activity and there are a range of stakeholders across the third and private sectors, including facility providers and grassroots sports clubs' (House of Commons, 2023, p.4), further cementing the push away from government responsibility onto other stakeholders. At around this time the government announced that it was investing nearly £2million over three years to deliver the *Inclusion 2024* programme led by the YST and the girls' competitive sport initiative 'Your Time'. In October 2022, under Liz Truss's brief spell as Prime Minister, the government announced that it would invest approximately £60million of underspend from the budget for the Commonwealth Games held in Birmingham which attracted £778million of public funding. This funding would be used to 'enhance the legacy of the brilliant Commonwealth Games' (DCMS, 2022b). The government stated that amongst several objectives, the fund would aim to increase access to sport and culture.

November 2022 saw another change in leadership under the Conservative Government, as Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister. The DCMS stated that through the PE and sport premium for primary schools it had allocated over £2billion of ringfenced funding to improve PE and sport since 2013. It recently announced that £320million of funding to primary schools would continue for the 22/23 academic year (DCMS, 2022c). In January 2023, Sunak committed to the publication of a new plan later in 2023. There is little literature or academic comment on recent sports initiatives, and whilst there are publications from DCMS and House of Lords, there is little evidence of progress made against these initiatives to increase sports participation or to improve the coordination and delivery of sport in the UK.

August 2023 saw the release of the latest sport and physical activity strategy '*Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity*' building on the *2015: Sporting Futures* strategy and retaining the five outcomes of physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and sustainable economic development first mentioned in the 2015 strategy. The strategy also included more reference to wider

individual and sector support 'ensuring there is a join-up between communities, schools and local healthcare systems to deliver opportunities to get active for all' (DCMS, 2023b) pointing to a continued widening of organisations to be involved in sport and physical activity.

One new approach to improving social, physical, and mental health that has emerged during this period is Social Prescribing (SP). SP is currently an area of focus for the VCSE and public service delivery sectors. SP is a way of creating referral pathways to connect individuals with support for their needs. The referrer is usually the primary care provider, and the individual can be prescribed activities provided by local councils, VSCE and community groups. Volunteering, sport, and physical activity can be part of the prescription (Costa *et al.,* 2021). SP has been viewed as an innovative solution to the sustainability of the NHS and has been successful in promoting partnerships with communities. Although this is still a relatively new policy area, it has been the focus of academic research with papers finding mixed results in the success of the referrals (Costa *et al.,* 2021).

2.4 Collaborative Governance and Public Policy

Osborne and Gaebler wrote 'those who steer the boat have far more power over its destination than those who row it' (1992, p.32). Hood (1995, p.107) went on to comment that this famous quote about the hierarchical nature of governance via 'steering' has been well used in its application to public management but that the more modern view stresses the difference that visionary leadership can make, the need to modernize public services through state-of-the-art informatization, and an emphasis on broad strategic vision. Rhodes (1996, p.652-653) defines governance as 'a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or changed condition of ordered rule; or a new method by which society is governed'. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) distinguish between 'policy decisions (steering) and service delivery (rowing)', arguing that bureaucracy is a bankrupt tool for rowing (cited in Hood 1996, p. 655).

There are changing and competing notions of governance throughout the period covered in this thesis. As Peck and Dickinson (2008) stated 'the period from the late 1940s until the 1970s is often characterised in governance terms as being a time of hierarchy and the era of public administration'. Different ruling parties have instrumented governance shifts away from traditional hierarchical models. Peters, (1993) remarked that introducing marketisation into the public sector ensured the process of hollowing out the state. Bevir and Rhodes (2007)

have discussed how there are many and varied theories of governance, and governance processes are not simple and clear-cut, with a high level of complexity stating that 'if governance is constructed differently, contingently and continuously, we cannot have a tool kit for managing it' (Rhodes, 2007, p. 1257). There has been no widely agreed definition of sports governance in the literature, yet broad definitions have been agreed as 'the structure and process used by an organisation to develop its strategic goals and direction, monitor its performance against these goals and ensure that its board acts in the best interest of the members' (Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007, p.9). Dowling, Edwards and Washington (2014, p.522) explain that governance can be used to explain professionalisation as part of an 'evolutionary process of bureaucratization and professionalization [that] has resulted in changing board roles and relationships'. Shilbury and Ferkins (2018) echo this stating that governance within a more professionalised sport sector now has functions and processes more in keeping with the private and not-for-profit sectors whereas some of the smaller amateur VSCs have struggled to keep pace with professionalisation. This is described in Hill, Kerr and Kobayashi (2021) research as 'operating under a traditional 'kitchen table' model'.

Changes in governance style have been influenced by public administration changes. It is important to understand how these different governance frameworks oversee sports organisations, events, and facilities and how changes in governance have impacted the development and management of sports activities. There are a number of governance frameworks such as the more traditional, hierarchical top-down approach (Birkland, 2005; Andrews, 2006; Stavins, 2010) bottom-up approach (Elmore, 1991; Hill, 1997), a polycentric approach (Polanyi, 1951; Ostrom, Tiebout and Warren, 1961; Ostrom, 2010); and a multilevel approach (Bulkeley, 2010; Homsy and Warner, 2013; Balme and Qi, 2014) which have been used to examine a variety of sectors. Harris, Dowling and Washington (2023, p.418) discussed how several frameworks have been used to examine the diverse range of sports organisations 'including federal/unitary governance (e.g., O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2016); systemic governance (e.g., Henry and Lee, 2004); collaborative governance (e.g., Shilbury, O'Boyle and Ferkins, 2016, 2020); stakeholder governance (e.g., Ferkins and Shilbury, 2015); and network governance (e.g., Chappelet, 2016)'.

Rhodes (1996) commented that governance has multiple meanings and definitions, but Stoker (1998, p.17) confirmed that in terms of public policy governance it is the 'development

of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors have become blurred' particularly when addressing social and economic issues. This definition fits well with how the voluntary, public, and private sectors have blurred the lines in order to provide grassroots, elite and sporting events. Osborne (2010, p. 6) defines good governance as 'concerned with the promulgation of normative models of social, political and administrative governance'. Kajaer (2011 p. 106) confirms that 'governance directs us to comparative questions of how and through what institutional mechanisms governing occurs in particular settings'. Conolly *et al.* (2021, p. 528) confirm that many of the governance and policy paradigms have had full review and analysis 'of the implications of policy making and implementation involving complex interdependencies within different parts of the public sector, and across to private and third sector bodies and organisations' by many scholars.

Ferkins *et al*. (2009, p.245) define sports governance as 'the responsibility for the functioning and overall direction of the organisation and is a necessary and institutionalised component of all sport codes from club level to national bodies, government agencies, sport service organizations and professional teams around the world' but discuss how applying a collaborative governance lens could make the term organisation needless as responsibility for a sport is shared. In further research Shilbury and Ferkins (2011, p. 114) believe that there is evidence to suggest that the 'strategic role and performance of boards, while central to the practice of governance, are a weakness in sport organisations (Shilbury, 2001; Hoye and Cuskelly, 2007; Ferkins *et al.*, 2005)'. This is despite Sport England and UK Sport developing 'A Code for Sports Governance' (which originated in 2016 and was reviewed in 2020) with organisations subscribing to the principles of the code, of which there are five principles of good governance (Sport England/UK Sport, 2021).

Lane (2000 p.37) compared the traditional and modern forms of public governance (see table 4), highlighting that the fundamental differences between them are, how the emphasis has changed from inward governance to external networks and collaboration.

Table 4: Traditional and Modern Public Governance (Lane, 2000, p.37)

Table 1.1 Traditional and modern public governance

Traditional public governance	*Modern public governance*
(1) Emphasis upon politics	(1′) Emphasis upon getting the job done
(2) Use of public law mechanisms: (a) bureau; (b) public enterprise	(2′) Use of private law instruments: (a) the contract; (b) tendering/bidding
(3) Separation between public and private players	(3′) Levelling the playing field
(4) Separation between allocation and regulation	(4′) Integration of allocation and regulation

Hassan (2021: p.1959) follows up on O'Boyle, Shilbury, and Ferkins (2019) statement that the governance of sport is a 'legitimate field of research' but that leadership within the governance of sport needs further research. O'Doyle and Shilbury (2016) also commented that whilst there have been a limited number of research studies related to the governance of sport and volunteering, none of included any element of the role trust places in the process.

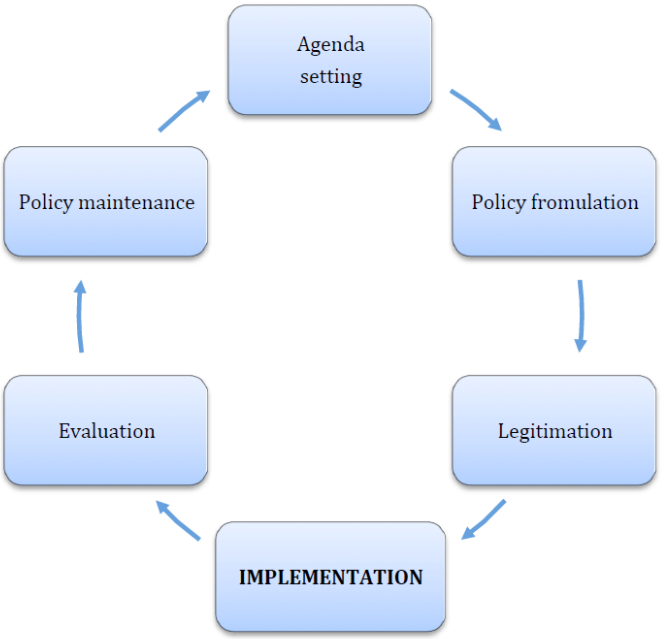
Public policy is a process of administratively working on achieving governmental goals within the means achievable (Howlett and Cashore, 2020). Dye (1972, p.2) offers one of the earliest and simplistic definitions as 'anything a government chooses to do or not to do'. More analytical definitions were developed better suited to understanding the complexity of public policy such as Jenkins (1978, p.15) who offered the more detailed definition as 'a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the section of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle, be withing the power of those actors to achieve'. With this more complex definition eliciting that public policy is made up of several parts, Hall's (1993) work suggested that there were different components and elements that made up public policy, creating a template for understanding policy on different levels and how policy and policy making goals can be articulated with policy means. Colebatch and Larmour (1993, p.17) discuss that analysing collective problems in public policy is a choice between 'bureaucracy, markets and community' (however these modes are mixed in practice). Cashore and Howlett (2007) adapted these ideas to create the following table (Table 5)

Table 5: A modified taxonomy of policy components based on Hall (1993) work. Modified by Cashore and Howlett (2007, p.14)

	Policy Content		
	High-Level Abstraction	***Programme Level Operationalization***	***Specific On-the-Ground Measures***
Policy Ends or Aims	GOALS	OBJECTIVES	SETTINGS
	What general types of ideas govern policy development?	What does policy formally aim to address?	What are the specific on-the-ground requirements of policy?
	(e.g. environmental protection, economic development)	(e.g. saving wilderness or species habitat, increasing harvesting levels to create processing jobs)	(e.g. considerations about the optimal size of designated stream-bed riparian zones, or sustainable levels of harvesting)
Policy Focus			
Policy Means or Tools	INSTRUMENT LOGIC	MECHANISMS	CALLIBRATIONS
	What general norms guide implementation preferences?	What specific types of instruments are utilized?	What are the specific ways in which the instrument is used?
	(e.g. preferences for the use of coercive instruments, or moral suasion)	(e.g. the use of different tools such as tax incentives, or public enterprises)	(e.g. designations of higher levels of subsidies, the use of mandatory vs voluntary regulatory guidelines or standards)

The policy process can also be understood through the policy cycle (Jann and Wegrich, 2007; Howlett and Ramesh, 2009; Howlett and Cashore 2020). The cycle of decision making initially formed by Lasswell (1971) had seven stages. The cycle has been through several reiterations but the consensus amongst academics is that this simpler model works best as an explanation for the process of policy making (Figure 3) (Cairney 2012, p.34).

Figure 3: Public Policy Cycle (Cairney, 2021, p.34)

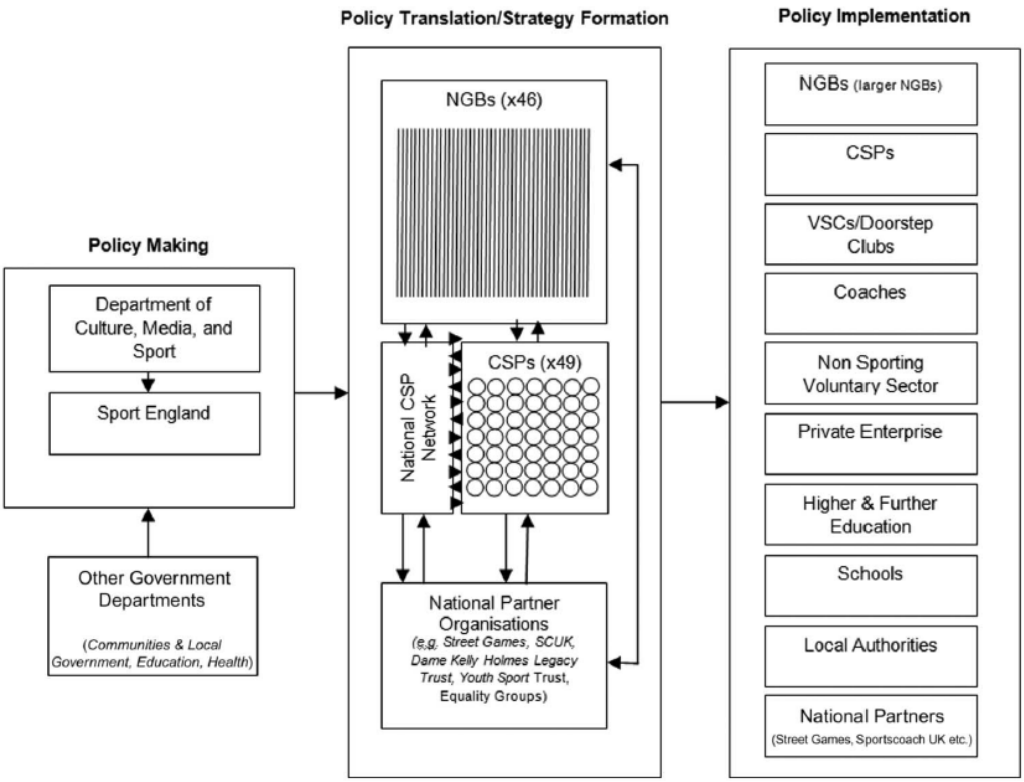


In addition to reviewing governance and public policy processes, analysing the complex hierarchical structures and key institutions involved in the delivery of sport will provide further context in the next section.

2.5 Structure of Sport in UK

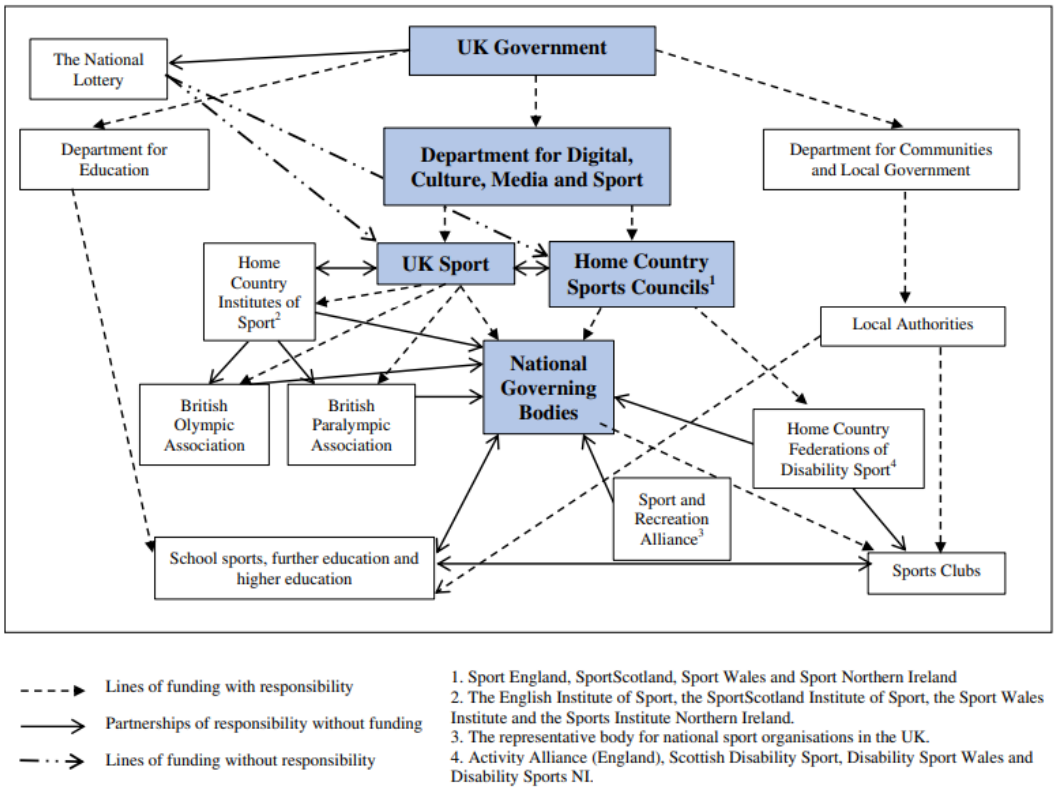
Sport in the UK is complex, with many organisations across different sectors involved from grassroots/participation level through to professional level sport and sporting events. May, Harris and Collins (2013) researched the relationships between organisations who make policy and those who implement it. The diagram in Figure 4 attempts to show the complexity of sport at the community level and the associated organisations involved. The diagram shows those involved across three stages; From *Policy Making* (Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Sport England) *Policy Translation* (National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and County Sport Partnerships (CSPs/Active Partnerships)) and *Policy Implementation* (local informal organisations (VSCs etc.) generally, run by volunteers who implement the policy at grassroots level).

Figure 4: Community Sport in England: the key stakeholders in policymaking, translation and implementation (Harris cited in May, Harris and Collins, 2013, p.398)



There have been limited newer models developed to explain the current structure of sport in the UK. If anything, the complexity of those involved in sport has increased as the definitions have widened to include physical activity, and health partners are now included. This could be because there is now a much wider multi-agency approach to sport, particularly at the participation level (Keech, Lindsay and Hayton, 2024). Figure 5 from Velija and Piggott (2022, p.7) shows the complexity, and includes elite level sport, but does not account for Active Sports Partnerships, private organisations, VSCEs etc., focusing more on elite sport channels or participation and progression.

Figure 5: Key Stakeholders of UK Governance (Velija and Piggott, 2022, p.7)



Leventhal *et al*. (2010, p.144) developed the *Third Party Model* (see Table 6). The model was developed to show the influence and interest third parties have on enhancing volunteering or 'volunteerability' but also shows where relationships and collaboration occurs between government and other sectors. Leventhal *et al*. (2010, p.143) explain that 'third parties can also play an important role. Governments, corporations, and educational institutes may all enhance the volunteerability of individuals and the recruitability of volunteer organisations. Each one of the three suggested third parties may and will have their own important interests in volunteering'.

Table 6: Third Party Model (Leventhal *et al*., 2010, p.143)

	Government	Corporate	Education
Why (motives and benefits)	Services; withdrawal of welfare responsibility; civil society, individual positive effects, maintaining social capital and social cohesion	Marketing; employees' satisfaction and involvement, sense of philanthropy	Future civil society; impact on universities; pressure from governments
Volunteerability			
Willingness	Legislation, awards, ministry	Organisational norm and expectancy, evaluation and promotion criteria	Awards, academic points, admission criteria, peer pressure
Capability	Support for research and training centres	Training for employees to volunteer	Skills; information about volunteering opportunities
Availability	Tax deduction, selection criteria for new public jobs	Volunteering during work hours	Service learning, academic points, career, scholarships
Recruitability			
Accessibility	Volunteer centres, national internet sites, physical accessibility	Information to employees, internet sites	Information to students, internet sites
Resources	Financial resources, human resources (employees)	Financial and human resources (employees), professional knowledge	Human resources (students), knowledge
Networking	Complementarities and cooperation, contracts for services	Professional knowledge and corporate volunteering	Knowledge, research, academic programmes
How	Monetary rewards, social marketing, mandatory service	Employee volunteering programme (different kinds and levels), family volunteering, matching, pressure, restriction	Community service, service learning, student volunteering programme, internet sites
Challenges	Bureaucracy ('red tape'), distance, level of commitment	Groups, taking over, level of restrictions, is it volunteering?	Short-term volunteering; low level of commitment

2.4.1 Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

Established in 1997, DCMS is a ministerial department that takes responsibility for sport at a policy level, driving policies through UK Sport (elite) and Sport England (grassroots/community/mass participation), and then delivered by agencies, public bodies and partners such as Active Partnerships, NGBs, local government, VCSEs and other partners (Mackintosh, Griggs and Tate, 2019; DCMS, 2023c). The UK government has generally adopted a non-interventionist model for sport – mainly providing financial and logistical support.

2.4.2 Sports Councils

The UK has five Sports Councils: UK Sport, Sport England, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales and Sport Northern Ireland. The Sports Councils provide the link to sports organisations – operating at 'arms-length' from government yet expected to account, explain and report on their decisions to the public, government and parliament (Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2009, p.682). During the 2000s it became clear that there was confusion over the roles of UK Sport and Sport England, and therefore a clear separation of funding and service provision was required. Game Plan (2002) set out that UK Sport should focus funding responsibility on 'high performance/elite sport' and Sport England should focus on 'grassroots/community/ mass participation'. Sport England's remit is to increase movement, sport and physical activity through the use of National Lottery funding and grant-in-aid from DCMS (Sport England, 2023b).

2.4.3 CSP/Active Partnerships

County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) were established in 1999/2000 with the remit to manage the local delivery of national programmes on behalf of the government through a single delivery system for community grassroots sport. There were 49 CSPs established to be non-profit and local led for local issues (Mason, 2019). Phillpots, Grix and Quarmby (2010, p.278) explained that early in their development CSPs were 'reflective of hierarchical and rational goal models of governance'. The CSPs were rebranded as Active Partnerships in 2019 in a move to better reflect their collaborative work (Knaggs, 2019). There are now 43 Active Partnerships across England, and now have a remit which is strategic that coordinates, funds and develops sport and now physical activity. Beacom, Ziakas and Trendafilova *et al*. (2023, p.523) sum up the role of Active Partnerships in their recent research, defining them as 'facilitators, networkers, partnership-builders and (increasingly) service providers, Active Partnerships are at the vanguard of a sport development sector undergoing systemic change'. Previous iterations of Active Partnerships worked primarily through Local Authorities but now work with volunteer and private sector organisations as a way to develop more funding streams and to widen impact (Beacom, Ziakas and Trendafilova *et al*., 2023, p.510). The latest strategy discusses collaborative working as 'Using our understanding of places and reach to 'tag' partners into conversations and platforms so everyone has the opportunity to get involved and help shape progress' (Active Partnerships, 2023).

2.4.4 National Governing Bodies

The role of the NGB has changed over time. Initially NGBs were seen as a vehicle for talent identification and to support athletes to compete at the top level. However, like other organisations involved with sport, they continue to operate in a 'continuously changing socio-economic environment and consequently require effective systems of governance' (Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2009, p.681). The policy of the late 1990s New Labour Government brought about a change of focus. Sport became a vehicle for regeneration, better health, and community cohesion, and to encourage volunteering to achieve an increase in social capital and active citizenship (Coalter, 2007; Harris, Mori and Collins, 2009). Therefore, NGBs had to now work collaboratively using principles of NPG with CSPs (now Active Partnerships) and Local Authorities in order to implement policy (Harris and Houlihan, 2014).

NGBs are significantly important in the delivery of sport, seen as the backbone of sport,

overseeing club level sport, membership, and volunteering. NGBs need to have sufficient governance systems and structure to ensure the objectives set by UK Sport and Sport England are being achieved. The role NBGs play alongside voluntary sports clubs within the wider sports and community sector should not be underestimated. Working at both ends of the spectrum with elite level athletes they also work to widen opportunities for all to be involved in sport and physical activity (Redmond, Hindmarsh and Godfrey, 2023).

2.4.5 Private and Public Sector Facilities/Leisure Trusts/Community Trusts

Facilities and their associated infrastructures for organised participation in sport and physical activity are important in the push to widen participation and are vital for communities. As well as providing opportunities, they also offer jobs and volunteering and a way to meet people through the social nature of them (DCMS, 2023b). Sports facilities previously in the hands of local authorities are now owned and managed by different sectors and collaborations as the pull back from state funding continued over the past four decades through localism acts, CCT and asset transfer policies to the private sector or a mixture of leisure and community trusts. Social Return on Investment (SROI) has been utilised as a way to demonstrate social and financial value of these types of facilities, but not without challenges due to the evidence and data needed (King, 2009; Davies; 2011; Davies *et al.,* 2021). Leisure facilities are well placed to provide communities with additional social support, and while the physical benefits of sport are well known, the benefits that these community resources provide to mental and social health are high (Evans *et al.,* 2020).

2.3.6 Voluntary Organisations, Community Groups and Social Enterprises (VCSEs)

Organisations who are able to interpret national sports policy and trickle-down funding from Active Partnerships and NGBs to local resources such as community sports organisations tend to fall under the umbrella term of Voluntary Organisations, Community Groups and Social Enterprises (VSCEs). VCSEs have been in existence as separate entities for years but during the 2020s the term VCSE was used to articulate the way these groups and organisations can support and play a role in 'addressing inequalities in wellbeing, wealth and living standards' (Greater Manchester VCSE Leadership Group, 2020, p.2). This sector is made up of the voluntary sector, the community sector, the social enterprise sector, and local infrastructure organisations (Haugh and Kitson, 2007). A report published by DCMS in 2022 commented on the role that VCSEs play in delivering 'smarter, more thoughtful, and effective public services

that meet the needs of people across the country. Over 75 percent of VCSEs deliver public services where they are based, with strong links to that locality' (Dove, 2022, p.1). VCSEs increasingly play a part in economic, social, and political activity (Pilkington *et al.*, 2021). One of the main areas of value of VCSEs is that they have experience and maturity in recruiting, supporting, and coordinating volunteer activity (Hallet, Gombert and Hurley, 2020). Community Sport has the largest cohort of volunteers and yet is under-researched within the academic community (Trussell, 2016; Baxter *et al*., 2023). Findlay-King *et al*. (2018) commented that academic research into the impact and role the third sector has on the provision and delivery of public services and leisure facilities has been minimal.

2.4.7 Voluntary Sports Clubs

At another level within VCSEs, Voluntary Sports Clubs (VSC) exist as facilities for mass participation from the community and grass roots sports development, yet also provide opportunities for talent identification and pathways to elite levels (Garrett, 2003). Voluntary Sports Clubs have also been since as important vehicles of change, according to Brown and Lanci (2006) the government identified football clubs as political ideologies, able to tackle a range of issues from health promotion to education. The use of volunteers is also a key benefit as a way to provide affordable sports activities for young people and hard to reach groups (Doherty, 2005; Nagel *et al.*, 2020).

VSCs usually run under a volunteer board structure with volunteers taking on all roles and responsibilities within the club. According to research from Harris, Mori and Collins (2009, p.405) volunteering in VSCs 'accounts for about a quarter of all volunteering in England'. Schlesinger and Doherty (2021, p.116) commented that VSCs can contribute to social policy goals and to widen participation through the sport development work they undertake and therefore 'important agents of public policy implementation for the state'.

Membership of the club can usually encompass volunteering as part of the roles and responsibilities of being a member of that club, and progression from participant/athlete or parent into board membership, coaching or other volunteer roles is the norm (De Clerk, 2019). Nichols and James (2008) acknowledged that membership is not limited to one club and members may have membership of different clubs.

The role and function of the board is to be responsible for the day to day running and conduct of the voluntary non-profit club. The board usually agree roles and responsibilities of

members and volunteers, sets a strategy, and ensures finances are managed well. According to Musick and Wilson (2008) volunteering within VSCs is usually hierarchical, and volunteers are usually assigned tasks. Board members are usually seen as the stalwarts of the club (Cuskelly, 2004; Nichols, 2005) and are often responsible for galvanising other volunteers or end up tied to these roles for long periods, doing most of the club work themselves (De Clerck, 2019). Nichols (2005) also believed those stalwarts to be those who contributed more than 300 hours a year to the club. However, there is research from McLeod et al (2021, 2023) and Yoshikawa and Rasheed (2009) that there are also individuals who benefit from this status quo and are therefore resistant to change. These individuals have been termed 'governance rent-seeking' (McLeod et al. (2023, p. 12). McCleod et al's (2024, p.16) further research into managing change in Golf Australia found that whilst there are challenges with overcoming rigid structures and rules, that a collective leadership style is required, and collaborative governance is the best way to manage change in sport. Wicker *et al*. (2014: p270) research into the optimal size for clubs found that larger clubs experienced fewer effects linked to the recruitment and retention of volunteers likely down to their capacity to pay staff and having 'the capacity to manage volunteers better. For example, they have money to pay a volunteer manager'.

2.4.8 Sports Events

The UK has hosted several mega and major sporting events this century, including but not limited to three Commonwealth Games, the London 2012 Olympics, UEFA Women's Euros, and the Rugby League World Cup. Brown and Massey (2001) produced research on behalf of UK Sport that focused entirely on mega events, specifically sports development impacts of the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games. This research was to establish a base line in terms of existing research, and no primary research was conducted as part of this study. The research found that this was an area which had been well researched previously, particularly in terms of tourism, economic and urban regeneration.

These events have impacted on their host neighbourhoods and communities in terms of urban and social regeneration (Nichols and Ralston, 2011). It is vital that there is a volunteer workforce at mega sporting events as without volunteers these events 'would cease to exist' (Goldblatt 2002, p.110). Baum and Lockstone (2007) agree that these mega sporting events attract and depend upon very large numbers in terms of volunteers. The costs of running such

events are very high, and as these events grow in size and scale, the size of the volunteer workforce also increases. The Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games saw the mobilisation of the largest group of volunteers (10,500) assembled in peacetime (Nichols and Ralston, 2011). Mega events have continued to rely on a volunteer workforce, with London 2012 seeing 70,000 volunteers utilised. Glasgow 2014 also saw 15,000 volunteers utilised and Birmingham 2022 with 14,000 volunteers. Holmes et al's (2018) research into the perceptions volunteers had of the management of their volunteer experience found that it is important to treat volunteers in a positive way throughout the recruitment and delivery phases of a games. The research also gave key insights into how the volunteer experience could be better managed at future games. Angosto *et al.* (2021, p.1) confirm that 'the sport event sector particularly depends largely on volunteers, as they play an important role in providing direct services, which is critical to the success of sporting events'.

There have been several studies about repeat volunteering at mega events by questioning volunteers about their volunteering experience (Downward and Ralston, 2006; Doherty, 2009). These two studies found that the quality of their volunteering experience at a mega event determines the likelihood that they will volunteer again. However, the studies focused only on mega events and did not examine whether volunteers would volunteer within community sports settings following an experience at a mega event. Byren (2006) researched 'bounce back' behaviour of episodic volunteering at mega events. Maclean and Hamm (2007) found that volunteer involvement at the 2005 Canadian Women's Open Golf Championships increased volunteers' likelihood of being associated with future golf events. Nicholls and Ralston (2011) concluded in their review of the Manchester 2002 volunteering legacy that it is possible for mega event volunteers to convert into long-term committed volunteers (Hallman and Dickson, 2017). The Greater London Authority (2007) cited in Nicholls and Ralston (2011) also conducted a review of the previous Olympics and found that the training that volunteers completed was for low-skilled positions and there was little evidence of any skill transfer following the Games.

In addition to the larger major and mega events, there are numerous community-based tournaments and events. Parkrun is one of these more community-based events with a focus on local events, run by a small team of core regular volunteers and the runners themselves encouraged to volunteer as well (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2021, p.493).

2.5 Chapter Conclusions

The review of the relevant sport and volunteering policy highlighted how the balance of sport and volunteering at both the elite and mass participation levels has been seen in successive policy documentation of ruling parties (Green, 2004, 2006). Support for mass participation has always been linked to social policy and has often been seen as a vehicle for solving health, education, youth behaviour or crime reduction (Houlihan and White, 2002; Coalter 2007; King, 2013). Councils' ability to run sport and leisure services for a wide range of users has been diminished through the hollowing out of the state and periods of financial instability. This has led to a widening of the remit of the voluntary sector in order to provide sport and leisure opportunities to tackle societal issues and hard to reach groups the state is no longer able to provide for. There has also been a drive for collaborative delivery between sectors as a way to continue to tackle issues the public sector no longer has capacity for.

Chapter Three Theoretical framework

3.0 Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter will establish the main conceptual approach of the thesis as collaborative governance. Within the context of sports volunteering, this chapter interrogates potential challenger approaches to collaborative governance that may exist in the practical GM City Region sports volunteering contexts. Approaches such as New Public Management (NPM), New Public Governance (NPG), New Public Service (NPS) also emphasise the importance of efficient and effective delivery in the NPM and cross organisational collaborative working in NPG. Volunteers also have underpinning motivations to improve life chances reflected in ideas of NPS. Moreover, co-production and co-creation (Voorberg, Bekkers and Tummers, 2015; Osborne, Radnor and Strokosch, 2016; Sten, Brandsen and Vershuere, 2018; Strokosch and Osborne, 2020; Osborne, Nasi and Powell, 2021) have also emerged as important elements of regional and national governance processes.

Sports volunteering has been impacted by the introduction of modernisation and efficiency models such as the introduction of targets and performance management at public/local level. The voluntary sector has increasingly had to fill the gap for social policy, pressures on local authority and austerity measures.

This chapter will provide a foundational level for the following chapters so that the main concepts can be explored and outlined to understand the findings and analysis. Collaborative governance underpins the analysis of sports volunteering with GM City Region within this thesis. Chapter Two examined the history of sport and volunteering policy, whereas this chapter will examine how public policy development has evolved to shape governance structures and respond to changing societal needs and challenges over time through collaborative governance approaches. Cleveland (1972, p.13) proposed that governance of the future would have some essential characteristics which moves it away from the traditional, hierarchical governance into more 'interlaced webs' with the way organisations being governed 'likely to be 'more collegial, consensual, and consultative'. In the current period, Government and the public/voluntary sectors are trying to balance conflicting but essential demands, trying to meet the needs of the public but attempting to reduce costs and improve efficiencies during a cost-of-living crisis (Webster and Neil 2022). Elliott *et al.* (2022) discussed how traditional forms of public administration or governance have moved aside for

more varied and complex governance which mirror the complexity of the UK State. A number of key disruptive factors such as devolution, austerity, Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic have meant established governance and public administration practice has shifted (*ibid,* 2022). This balancing act also applies to the sports sector. Chadwick (2022) commented that there have been extreme changes affecting the world, and the sports world, which will have far-reaching effects that could shape how sport is played, accessed, and supported.

As seen in Chapter Two, various governments have attempted to shift the voluntary sector from the margins of society to become more mainstream in order for it to support delivery of public services, and as Baines and Hardill (2008, p.307) summarised 'voluntary organisations (and volunteers) now have a significant role in the delivery of public services'.

Talbot (2016, p.243) defined the two terms of public policy as 'can't govern' and 'won't govern'. The term 'can't govern' relates to the power of central government and the state to influence society has been weakened or 'hollowed', whereas the 'won't govern' narrative has the belief the state should be minimised and therefore not subject to any form of competition. Grix and Phillpots (2011, p.15) stated that 'the sport policy sector is a deviant' moving away from traditional big government mechanisms to a way of working more collaboratively in networks. Sports volunteering is vital for community development, and many organisations across the sectors rely on volunteers and these networks to operate. Public policy impacts on funding and strategic initiatives for sports organisations which, dependent on the level of government intervention, can lead to reform and modernisation, with sports organisations developing more formalised public sector ways of working (Houlihan and Green, 2009; Adams, 2011; Adams, 2014; Tacon and Walters, 2016). According to Schwabenland (2006) voluntary organisations had historically placed great value on their independence and used this as a way to define the organisations' purpose. Yet there were some who viewed the voluntary sector as 'poorly organised' (Cunningham 2000, p.192) and unable to cope with a growth in the voluntary workforce. Successive governments have initiated policy reform as a way to reduce the cost of public services and have often turned to the voluntary sector to outsource services away from the State. This has led to increased modernisation and the development of management practices including Human Resource Management (HRM) processes which are now seen within the voluntary and sports sectors (Kellock Hay *et al.*, 2001; Taylor and McGraw, 2006).

3.1 Professionalisation of the sports sector

As can be seen in Chapter Two there has been a historical base of sport having unique governance rules and regulations due to the volunteer and grassroots base (Geeraert, Mrkonjic and Chappelet, 2015; Hassan *et al.*, 2022). Alongside the pressure to modernise as part of the Labour Government's election promise there was also pressure to modernise as sports organisations increasingly turned to professionalisation. Professionalisation of sport organisations is defined by Nagel *et al.,* (2015, p.408) 'as a process of transformation leading towards organisational rationalisation, efficiency and business-like management'. Dowling, Edwards and Washington's (2014, p.528) definition is more focused and includes the reference to how the voluntary sector has become 'an increasingly business-like phenomenon'. Whereas the Professionalisation of volunteers is seen through their competence and the higher expectations placed on them (Nagel *et al*., 2015). Mulcahy and Kerr (2022) commented that organisational professionalisation (Dowling et al., 2014: p. 677) placed high expectations on paid staff such as coaches as a way to develop a 'business-like reporting relationship'.

The professionalisation of sport was instigated by several challenges the sector was facing, such as growth in competitions and use of media, the tension of volunteer/paid staff to ensure sports provision, and the range of partners and stakeholders across public and private sectors (Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011; Breuer, 2013; Nagel *et al*. 2015).

Kikulis (2000 p.293) in research into national sports organisations in Canada found that professionalisation was being driven by growth and the complexity of demand, but this has resulted in formalising volunteer and volunteer board roles to ensure organisations get more expertise 'in an effort to develop more efficient, accountable, and 'competitive' organizations'. Part of the professionalisation of sport also included coaching. There was a move to focus more on coach training, education, and qualifications in a bid to improve the quality and standards of the profession which away from professional sport was seen as a predominantly voluntary effort (Taylor and Garratt, 2010; Seippel, 2019; Mills *et al*. 2022, p.2214). The professionalisation of sport has meant that sports organisations and their boards needed to develop new ways of working to navigate new challenges and operate fit-for-purpose processes (O'Boyle and Bradbury 2013). Some of the tensions that developed from professionalisation were issues with growing disparity of athlete wages, an increase in

gambling issues, increased expectations of performance, and demands for improved investments in sports facilities and supporting services (Hassan *et al*., 2022 p.1959). Shilbury and Ferkins (2011, p.113) commented that there are also tensions from professionalisation unique to sports organisations in the 'transition from a traditionally volunteer-driven model to a hybrid between paid staff and volunteers'. Dowling, Edwards and Washington (2014) also recognised that there are tensions in the areas of leadership, motivations, structure and performance between volunteers and paid employees.

3.2 Adopting the Collaborative Governance Perspective

This section examined the evolution of public administration concepts that can provide context for collaborative governance in sports volunteering. While collaborative governance serves as the principal theoretical lens for this thesis, it exists within related governance concepts that have shaped both policy and practice. The concepts start with New Public Management (NPM) and move through to examine collaborative governance. Elements of these concepts can be seen within the sports volunteering literature, but collaborative governance is the most relevant. By reviewing the public administration theories, collaborative governance is established as the main lens as it offers analytical tools for examining the complex, multi-stakeholder arrangements found in the GM City Region's sports volunteering landscape.

Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh's (2021, p.67) research into NGBs found that 'There was near universal acceptance of a top-down approach to change within NGBs, which was also revealed as being cyclical in nature as aligned to each 4-year WSP cycle'. This top-down approach driven by NGBs then filters down into VSOs. In VSOs this may be because there is a continuous cycle of top-down change and variation in structures, funding and functions. The top-down approach in sport is seen as a clear chain of command from government at varying levels, which is then implemented on a more local level. Birkland (2005) advocates for this approach to have a single authority body responsible for the implementation of the policy. Other supporters of the top-down approach such as Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) agree that this method, which needs clearly defined goals, leads to stronger implementation. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) building on Gunn's (1978) work, set out a top-down approach which was more practice based. This framework listed certain conditions that needed to be met, such as having sufficient time and resources and clear agreed objectives to implement a

top-down approach successfully (Hill, 1997, p. 131). Critiques of the top-down approach found that this approach is too rigid and although there may be a governmental approach, this is to be implemented across many local partners as can be seen in the implementation of sports policy (Barrett and Hill, 1981). There are examples of where top-down governance led to volunteers being replaced by salaried posts, such as with UK Athletics through their modernisation drive (Grix, 2009). Organisations involved with implementation may be able to use their own discretion to address a policy directive which can lead to variation and compromise.

An opposite approach is the bottom-up model where the action/problem is used as a starting point in order for actions to be developed. Elmore (1981, p.1) coined this as 'backwards reasoning'. Hill (1997, p.139) comments that this approach therefore has 'action as a continuous process of interaction with a changing and changeable policy, a complex interaction structure, an outside world which must interfere with implementation because government action impinges upon it and implementing actors who are inherently difficult to control'. Grix and Phillpots (2011, p.15) found that organisations such as Active Partnerships could spur on a local community focused response from the bottom up, but that government sports policy is inherently top-down 'with little or no chance for input from stakeholders to change priorities already set higher up the policy-making chain'.

With regard to multilevel governance, there are a variety of interpretations ranging from more nested multi-level where city governance work with central government (Dale *et al*., 2018; Li and Yi, 2014) to more horizontal levels of collaboration between government, cities and other actors, meaning that there can be co-production of knowledge, policy and outcomes (Homsy and Warner, 2013). Other theorists have also focused on the level of interdependencies between all interested parties regardless of whether there is any influence over outcomes (Alcantra and Nelles, 2014). Bulkeley and Betsill (2005) found that in a multilevel governance framework, cities interact with regional and national governments through a hierarchical structure, but also coordinate with each other and with non-state actors in a more networked way in order to achieve outcomes. Multi-level governance is complex, made up of many intersectional parts which could be described as 'patchwork' (Bache and Flinders, 2004, p.39; Cairney 2019, p,141). Other terminology cited similar to 'patchwork' is the fragmentation of governance arising from decisions made, constraints and

the implementation of these (Kitchin and Moore-Cherry, 2021, p.1914). There are opportunities to create and manage policies in diverse and creative ways, allowing for community choice, but Euncher (2003) cautions between creativity and disruptive fragmentation.

The polycentric approach was originally developed by Polanyi (1951), Harris, Dowling and Washington (2023, p.419) discussed how Polanyi found that 'multiple actors have the freedom to pursue their interests within a broader system of recognised rules'. In further development of this framework Ostrom *et al*. (1961) highlighted that these types of systems had multiple points of decision making and each could have their own formal processes and boundaries. Harris, Dowling and Washington (2023, p.419) commented that there is a challenge in 'identifying and responding to the needs of community interests or publics where these extend beyond the boundaries of each formal entity that make up the system'. Harris, Dowling and Washington (2023 p.431) went on to conclude that further research was needed within different sectors in sport, particularly how the polycentric framework could 'influence governance behaviours and actions within the sport system'.

Homsey *et al*. (2018, p.574) stated that they believed the gap in the literature was that there is an absence of a framework that tracks varied and multifaceted interactions and proposed a framework of 5 points which integrated all types of multilevel governance. The components are the coordinating and sanctioning role of a central authority, engagement of civil society, co-production of knowledge, capacity provision, and framing of co-benefits. Harris, Dowling and Washington (2023, p.418) confirmed that governance has significantly developed in that it is no longer the responsibility of government, but that a number of organisations, actors and groups may be involved in the process. Johnson *et al*. (2023) mapped different models of governance and policymaking in the Greater Manchester region, and that while literature in this area shows that although there are governance mechanisms outside of the state, local interest and actors may mean that conflict emerges as there are different visions and agendas competing for funds and resources (Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2021).

3.2.1 New Public Management (NPM)

New Public Management originated in the 1980s as a new approach to public sector management as a shift away from Public Administrations (Hood, 1995) and is a way to explain how management approaches from the private sector, such as bureaucracy and control,

began to be applied to public (and voluntary) sectors through a period of rapid change (Lane, 2000). Osborne *et al*. (2022, p.634) confirmed that there has been a huge shift in public administration and management (PAM) in response to the ongoing theoretical developments in this area but also as a response to some of the disruptive factors the UK has seen recently.

There are some variations amongst theorists as to what NPM encompasses. Aucoin (1990) wrote about administrative reform in public management as a response to fiscal stress which led to budget cuts and therefore a reduction of public services. Hood (1991, p.3) described NPM as a way to describe changes in public management which were 'dominating the bureaucratic reform agenda' and that although there were competing views as to overlap in NPM it essentially came down to shifts from policymaking to management approaches and outputs (Hood, 1995, p.95). Hood (1991, p.4-5) went on to develop seven doctrines of NPM which were the key overlapping discussions at the time, these being '1. Hands on professional management, 2. Explicit standards and measures of performance, 3. Greater emphasis on output controls, 4. Shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector, 5. Shift to greater competition in public sector, 6. Stress on private-sector styles of management practice, 7. Stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use.' Linking back to the earlier discussion of governance Rhodes (1996, p.655) discussed how NPM is directly relevant to all analysis of governance 'because steering is central to the analysis of public management and steering is a synonym for governance'. McLaughlin, Ferlie and Osborne (2001) acknowledged that amongst its positive attributes, NPM encourages hands-on management, entrepreneurship and increases employee motivation. Ferlie *et al.* (1996) found that NPM drove efficiency through downsizing, decentralising and restructuring in order to reduce costs. Hood (2000) later went on to point out the differences from the more traditional ethos of PSE due to NPM prioritising efficiency and performance.

Modernisation as terminology used in governance and NPM arenas was initially developed through New Labour's drive to improve public and then also voluntary services (Tacon and Walters, 2016). Modernisation was therefore driven by a need to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness through cultural change with a view to producing modern services through community leadership (Cochrane, 2004). Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) commented that New Labour's top-down approach to modernisation was inspired by NPM ideology. Houlihan and Green (2009, p.679) confirmed that the Labour win in 1997 and their

election promise to modernise ‘the institutions of government was unlikely to leave the sport policy infrastructure undisturbed'. Governance structures within the sports sector have now adopted more flexible and decentralised governance. Organisations have had to modernise practices, technology, and management approaches. Modernisation in sports sector governance involves adopting more flexible and decentralised decision-making structures. This might include the establishment of independent bodies, task forces, or committees to address specific issues, allowing for quicker responses to emerging challenges. In summary, modernisation in UK sports governance involves a shift towards more adaptive, transparent, and inclusive practices, leveraging technology and data to enhance decision-making and focusing on commercialisation to sustain and grow the sports sector (Tacon and Walters, 2016). Green and Houlihan (2006, p.50) state that ‘modernization programs shape and sculpt the management and administration of NGBs.’ Given that the opportunities to get involved or to participate in sport within England is predominantly through the third sector and VSCs (Houlihan and Green, 2009; Adams and Deane, 2009; Harris, Mori and Collins, 2009; Grix, 2009; Adams, 2014) modernisation programmes the New Labour Government via Sport England and UK Sport filtered down to VSCs, with these modernisation efforts addressing the evolving needs and expectations of stakeholders, including athletes, fans and the broader community. Adams (2011, p.25) commented that modernisation was important to the Voluntary and Community Sector and to VSCs, but that modernisation would mean implementing all facets of NPM. Adams (2014) later commented that NPM enabled modernisation practices such as performance management and measurement in a bid to improve performance. Wilson (2003) and Stoker (2001) both commented that modernisation was a version of 'control freakery'. Houlihan and Green (2009, p.696) discussed the consequences of modernisation with one related to restrictions to staff/volunteers working in the sector through measures brought in via NPM such as audits, KPIs and inspections with another consequence being the sidelining of sports interests ‘often behind a rhetorical façade of empowerment’. Adams (2011, p.24) on the other hand, discusses one element of modernisation driven by New Labour was the concept of active citizenship which has enabled the voluntary sector to provide further opportunities to improve communities ‘beyond any commitment to paid work’. Andrews (1999, p.17) also supports this view that ‘modernization is the ideology of the never-ending present ’.

NPM as a public management approach does have its critics and Osborne *et al.* (2022, p.634) found that some critiques (Haveri, 2006; Funck and Karlsson, 2020) were focused on the 'appropriateness of its product-dominant assumptions, its challenge to democratic governance, its adherence to outmoded models of competition, and its introspective emphasis on the internal efficiency of PSOs rather than external impact'. One view from Brown *et al.* (2016, p.23) is that NPM is a 'crazy paving of fragmented agencies and quangos, one step removed from government…further complicating any attempts at modernisation and reform'. Stoker (1999) and Dunleavy (2015) were both of the opinion that modernisation via NPM was just a 'cost-cutting' rhetoric which lacked any sort of consistency. With a more balanced view, Shand (2018, p.231), in a paper on environmentalism found that despite criticism of NPM 'being too focused on the private sector and too obsessed with outcomes and efficiencies' that NPM was still the better framework in order to facilitate and manage 'targets, efficiencies and outcomes'. Clarke and Newman (1997) also commented on the double-edged sword of NPM that it works well as a method to improve efficiency through more agile working but can also lead to stress and over-working from those at the operational end. Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) found that there were differences in the rigidity of NPM amongst theorists with some believing that NPM could change and adapt (van Thiel *et al*., 2007) while others (Andrews, 2010) believed that the fundamental tenets of NPM would remain the same with only local input changing the policies.

Within the framework of NPM as part of the public administration reforms there emerged the term New Managerialism (NM) which really emphasised the application of private sector managerial techniques to the public and voluntary sectors by the governing state (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Grix and Phillpots, 2011). Mather *et al.* (2009) found that some of these managerialism initiatives were unpopular, and the public sector workforce resisted the implementation of these. There has been some debate (Roberts, 2000; van Bueren *et al*., 2003; Sam, 2009) as to whether these measures have been successful to address the 'wicked problems' (Durant and Legge, 2006 p.311) that the public sector faces, and yet managerialism concepts such as contracts, objectives and targets, and performance management are well embedded within the management of public services (Hood and Peters, 2004). Green (2007) wrote that sport had increasingly aligned with NPM with government, NSO and VSC all using NPM and NM techniques and that within the sector there was salience to government

objectives. Sam (2009, p.504) commented that what previously would have been a wholly volunteer response (Howlett, 2008) would now be susceptible to managerialist ways of working such as contracts. Houlihan and White (2002) also found that there was a greater willingness from local government and public sector bodies to operate by contract i.e., through CCT as discussed in Chapter Two.

Although there was a shift in PA with NPM becoming the 'normative model' (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000, p.550) there has not been a complete move away from the more traditional top-down governance as Warner *et al*., cited in Goldfinch (Ed), (2023, p.315) explain 'NPM did not 'roll back' the frontiers of the state' and consecutive governments have not been able to quell the rise in public expenditure (Hood and Himaz, 2017) amidst the increasing needs of the public and 'rising citizens' expectations'. (Dickson, 2016, p.45). Burnham and Pyper (2008) cited in Adams (2014, p.553) 'argue that NPM can be seen as a loose-knit collection of ideas for improving performance rather than as a coherent governing ideology'. Hood (2000, p.196) however, believed that modernisation as part of NPM was 'movement' and although there may not be full transference to NPM initially by all of the public and voluntary sectors, but was part of an implementation project 'that is still in full flow' (Hyndman and Lapsley, 2016 p.24). McLaughlin, Ferlie and Osborne (2001) stated that although there were still debates to be had, in terms of managing public services NPM was the prevailing paradigm. Findlay-King *et al*. (2018) commented that the public service management literature explores this premise well, through their drive to reduce costs and increase income, but also found that there was a hybrid strategy that whilst tenets of NPM prevailed there was still a drive to add value and keep costs low.

The limitations of NPM's approach created space for more networked and collaborative perspectives that better recognise the relational aspects of sports volunteering.

3.2.2 New Public Governance (NPG)

Osborne (2010, p.6) presents NPG as a 'conceptual tool' rather than as a new paradigm designed to replace PA and NPM. As a conceptual tool NPG was deemed to be useful as a way to make sense of the multifaceted ways in which people working with and in public service could sense make. There is an acknowledgement that knowledge can be dispersed amongst different stakeholders in the voluntary, public, and private sector and national and local

community networks, and that innovation happens through networking and collaboration. Dickinson (2006) defined New Public Governance (NPG) as a concept to explain how there is plurality within the state where there are multiple interdependent actors who all play an active part in the work of public services and contribute to policymaking. Rhodes (1996) commented that the new governance approach highlighted four flaws with NPM, an intra-organisational approach rather than inter-organisational, too much focus on metrics (objectives) and therefore with results and the contradiction between competition and steering. Yet as Grix and Phillpots (2011, p.7) stated, in the sport sector some of these flaws in NPM 'have become entrenched in the management of sport policy making and accountability' and movement towards new governance has been stilted.

Osborne (2006) commented that there were strengths to the NPG framework in that it recognised and developed the strengths of Public Administration (PA) and NPM through the links between policy making and implementation. Osborne (2006) provided a comparative table which includes the elements of PA, NPM and NPG (Table 7). While NPM uses private sector business management principles, marketisation and incentivisation focused on cutting costs and efficiencies, NPG recognises governance as more pluralistic, with multiple actors from different sectors coordinating horizontally as well as vertically. There are critiques about efficiency, but a level of trust and community representation is prioritised.

Table 7: Elements of the NPG, in contrast to PA and the NPM (Osborne, 2006, p.10)

Paradigm/key elements	*Theoretical roots*	*Nature of the state*	*Focus*	*Emphasis*	*Relationship to external (non-public) organizational partners*	*Governance mechanism*	*Value base*
Public Administration	Political science and public policy	Unitary	The policy system	Policy implementation	Potential elements of the policy system	Hierarchy	Public sector ethos
New Public Management	Rational/public choice theory and management studies	Disaggregated	Intra-organizational management	Service inputs and outputs	Independent contractors within a competitive market-place	The market and classical or neo-classical contracts	Efficacy of competition and the market-place
New Public Governance	Organizational sociology and network theory	Plural and pluralist	Inter-organizational governance	Service processes and outcomes	Preferred suppliers, and often inter-dependent agents within ongoing relationships	Trust or relational contracts	Neo-corporatist

Amongst NPG's strengths is a focus on democratic participation, transparency, and responding to societal needs versus imposing top-down targets. There is a level of trust versus the performance measurement seen in NPM. There should be a diversity of providers in directly delivering public services rather than monopolisation, however, there have been preferred suppliers and issues (Worth, 2013). This therefore speaks to more collaborative delivery as way to improve choice, efficiency and innovation. NPG could provide a framework for future analysis and evaluation especially in the modernisation the voluntary sector and the voluntary sector's provision of public services. (Osborne and McLaughlin, 2002; Osborne, 2006).

3.2.3 New Public Service (NPS)

The governance approach emerging after but building upon NPM and NPG is termed New Public Service (NPS). The focus of NPS is serving citizens rather than customers, and prioritising collective shared interests in order to achieve 'shared service delivery interests between the state and the citizens through a systematic process of community and civil society engagement' (Okafor 2023, p.233). Accountability is defined by consultation and responsiveness of those impacted by the policies, which can be demonstrated effectively by Sport England's 'test and learn' approach to collaborative governance. This approach demonstrates how much governance has moved on in terms of accountability and performance, where there has been a shift away from hierarchical traditional ways of reporting on initiatives, to one that is more multi-dimensional where accountability has shifted to multiple actors (Liddle, 2018). NPS has emerged conceptually and as an advanced practice which moves beyond the collaboration networks of New Public Governance, having a shift where the emphasis is more explicitly towards democratic participation, ethics and equity (Denhardt 1993; Denhardt and Denhardt 1999, 2000). Denhardt and Denhardt (2000, p.553-557) went on to identify seven principles of NPS, with the caveat that 'these lessons are not mutually exclusive, rather, they are mutually reinforcing'. These principles are as follows: '1. Serve rather than steer, 2. The public's interest is the aim, not the by-product, 3. Think strategically and act democratically, 4. Serve citizens, not customers, 5. Accountability isn't simple, 6. Value people, not just productivity, 7. Value citizenship and public service above entrepreneurship'. These principles confirm the thinking that within a democratic society democratic values should be at the forefront of all future work relating to governance

and while elements of NPM/NPG such as efficiency and productivity will continue, they should be considered more with public interest at the centre and therefore NPS could provide a framework within which other paradigms could sit (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000). New Public Service arose in reaction to perceived shortcomings of market-based public sector reforms. Denhardt and Denhardt (2015) have since lamented that NPS has not become a dominant framework despite the critiques of NPM and NPG.

One complementary but overlapping framework to NPS is Public Service Ethos (PSE). These frameworks do have considerable conceptual overlap and alignment around core principles such as serving the public interest with a commitment to promoting social good through ethics, trustworthiness and integrity. These are all characteristics which are seen within the voluntary and sports sector, with integrity, fair play and a balance between competitive success and community benefit inherent in most VSCs work. Public Service Ethos has a longer history than NPS and is defined on its own merits but has had an uncertain placing amongst the other frameworks and whether the newer concepts usurp one another or can be seen as complementary and enduring frameworks (Shand *et al*., 2023). One of the main PSE principles where public interest and a contribution to society is valued highly (Lawton, Rayner, and Lasthuizen, 2013; Shand and Howell, 2015; Shand and Hyde, 2016) can often be seen in VSCs. Shand, Parker and Elliott (2022) argue that whilst collaborative governance and partnership working have levels of complexity they should not be viewed as separate from PSE. Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) compared the perspectives of Old Public Administration, NPM and NPS (See Table 8) as a way critically review the developments across multiple levels. There is clear progression in the language of how the public are termed from clients/customers to citizens and the introduction of the collaboration structures under NPS fit with a collaborative governance ethos. The pull back of the state is also stark when viewed in this way moving to service through collaboration.

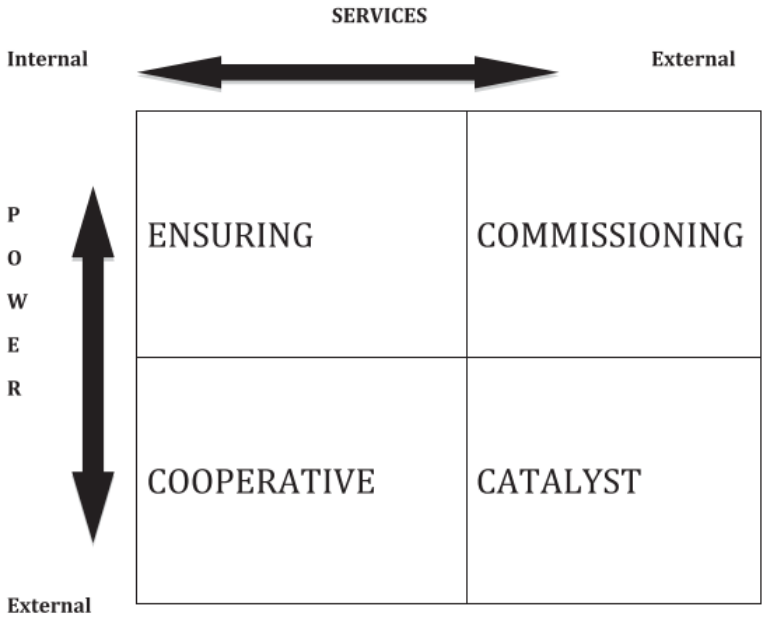
Table 8: Comparing Perspectives: Old Public Administration, New Public Management and New Public Service (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000, p.554)

	Old Public Administration	New Public Management	New Public Service
Primary theoretical and epistemological foundations	Political theory, social and political commentary augmented by naive social science	Economic theory, more sophisticated dialogue based on positivist social science	Democratic theory, varied approaches to knowledge including positive, interpretive, critical, and postmodern
Prevailing rationality and associated models of human behavior	Synoptic rationality, "administrative man"	Technical and economic rationality, "economic man," or the self-interested decision maker	Strategic rationality, multiple tests of rationality (political, economic, organizational)
Conception of the public interest	Politically defined and expressed in law	Represents the aggregation of individual interests	Result of a dialogue about shared values
To whom are public servants responsive?	Clients and constituents	Customers	Citizens
Role of government	Rowing (designing and implementing policies focusing on a single, politically defined objective)	Steering (acting as a catalyst to unleash market forces)	Serving (negotiating and brokering interests among citizens and community groups, creating shared values)
Mechanisms for achieving policy objectives	Administering programs through existing government agencies	Creating mechanisms and incentive structures to achieve policy objectives through private and nonprofit agencies	Building coalitions of public, nonprofit, and private agencies to meet mutually agreed upon needs
Approach to accountability	Hierarchical—administrators are responsible to democratically elected political leaders	Market-driven—the accumulation of self-interests will result in outcomes desired by broad groups of citizens (or customers)	Multifaceted—public servants must attend to law, community values, political norms, professional standards, and citizen interests
Administrative discretion	Limited discretion allowed administrative officials	Wide latitude to meet entrepreneurial goals	Discretion needed but constrained and accountable
Assumed organizational structure	Bureaucratic organizations marked by top-down authority within agencies and control or regulation of clients	Decentralized public organizations with primary control remaining within the agency	Collaborative structures with leadership shared internally and externally
Assumed motivational basis of public servants and administrators	Pay and benefits, civil-service protections	Entrepreneurial spirit, ideological desire to reduce size of government	Public service, desire to contribute to society.

Strongly linked to PSE is Public Service Motivation (PSM). One seminal definition of PSM is from Perry and Hondeghem (2008, p.vii) where PSM is 'an individual's orientation to delivering services to people with a purpose to do good for others and society'. Ritz, Brewer and Neumann (2016) found that research has focused on PSM within the public sector but Leisink *et al*. (2021, p.866) found that the attributes of PSM also lend themselves to wider civic behaviour such as formal and informal volunteering. Shand *et al*. (2023, p.6) commented that PSM and the associated idea of 'calling to care' demonstrated that there is still 'an underpinning spirit of service, duty and contribution to the public good'. Leisink *et al.* (2021, p.869) critiqued the existing research studies between volunteering and PSM as most studies did not measure PSM clearly and did not separate out different volunteering domains, and that there is no causality between PSM and volunteering. There are certainly differing opinions in the academic research such as Perry *et al.*'s (2008 p.447) findings that 'volunteering more often than not leads to PSM rather than the reverse' while Clerkin *et al.* (2009) argued that experience within some settings meant that some individuals went on to develop PSM that then led them to volunteer. King (2014) conducted research that built on

the model 'A typology of organisational models for councils' which was developed by the Institute of Local Government Studies (2012). King adapted this model to create 'A typology of organisational models for sport services' (see Figure 6) to highlight the shift away from ensuring councils to more co-operative models which facilitate co-production of sport provision by collaborating with public and third sector organisations (King, 2014). Hayton and Walker (2018) contend that the relationship continues to change as services are now principally delivered by either the voluntary or private sectors.

Figure 6: A typology of organisational models for sport services (King, 2014, p.350)



Though New Public Service emphasizes citizenship, collaborative governance more explicitly addresses how stakeholders and institutions navigate differences through structured collaborative processes.

3.2.4 Public Value

The concept of public value as a response to NPG has been widely discussed in the academic literature (Moore, 1994, 1995; Alford and Flynn, 2009; Guthrie *et al*., 2014). Moore's (1994, p.296) seminal research on Public Value defined it initially as 'the task of a public sector manager is to create public value'. Moore updated his 1994 research in 2014 which answered questions raised from the initial research which was how organisations know when public value has been created (Moore, 2014). Value has been associated with Public Administration since the 1980s as part of the *Value for Money* and *Best Value* initiatives (Osborne *et al.*, 2022) created to review public spending and move towards CCT by the incumbent Conservative

Government. Alford and O'Flynn (2009, p.187) concluded in their research that 'we are still some way from being in a position to predict whether public value will prove to have enduring value in the public administration and management domain'. The debate over terminology of Public Value continues today, and there is still no clear definition due to the ambiguity of the term (Osborne *et al.,* 2020). Long-term public interest, whilst similar to public value, refers to a type of governance that prioritises the broader interests and well-being of society as a whole (Lok-Sang, 2012). Shand *et al*. (2023) commented that value is of public interest but is not reflected fully in the NPM model as the reality of service delivery is not fully considered.

Guthrie *et al*. (2014, p.4) discussed that 'understanding the gap between expectations of citizenship and resources available for public services is an important topic worthy of debate', and Cuganesan, Guthrie and Vanic (2014) called for further research into alternative performance approaches and the use of action research approaches. There are clearly opposing and competing viewpoints of the importance of public value and its application either within the management of organisations or as value to society (Faulkner and Kaufman, 2018; Fukumoto and Bozeman 2019; Osborne *et al.*, 2020; O'Flynn, 2021). Osborne *et al.* (2022) attempting to address a gap in theory have created a conceptual Public-Service Ecosystem where they argue that public value and value creation are essential components.

Whilst Public Value theory highlights outcomes, collaborative governance can better capture the procedural elements of how these outcomes are produced.

3.2.5 Co-Creation and Co-Production

Though there are vast similarities between co-creation and co-production there are important differences recently discussed in the academic literature (Voorberg, Bekkers and Tummers, 2015; Osborne, Radnor and Strokosch, 2016; Sten, Brandsen and Vershuere, 2018; Strokosch and Osborne, 2020; Osborne, Nasi and Powell, 2021). Co-creation and co-production require an active involvement from communities as a way to produce services (Strokosch and Osborne, 2020; Osborne, Nasi and Powell, 2021). In recent years the narrative has become one of a partnership approach whereby individuals, community leaders and community groups are encouraged to actively participate in how public services are designed, delivered and led (Nabatchi, Sancino and Scicilia, 2017). According to Matos and Fernandes (2021) any volunteering activity could be deemed as co-creation, yet volunteering research is limited into how volunteer co-creation has gone over and above the normal duties required

of a volunteer, and their research attempted to connect customer engagement and volunteering. Research from within sport has been mainly around sport for development programmes. Spaaij, Oxford and Jeanes's (2016) research confirmed that dialogue is required in order to understand individual needs, and this can therefore result in a collaborative responsibility for participants. Parker *et al.* (2019) also confirmed the importance of dialogue and collaboration with participants taking some responsibility for their own pathways. Within sports volunteering the creation of Volunteering Communities of Practice are being developed where groups of key sports volunteering stakeholders are brought together to inform policy and practice (Inoue *et al*., 2023).

Collaborative governance extends co-creation approaches by providing specific attention to institutional contexts and historical relationships that shape collaborative possibilities. This includes factors particularly relevant to understanding the embedded nature of sports volunteering within regional structures.

3.2.6 Network and Partnerships Governance

Network governance is defined as 'entities that fuse collaborative public goods and service provision with collective policymaking' (Isett *et al.*, 2011, p. 158) that is based on the principles of trust, reciprocity, negotiation, and mutual interdependence among actors (Provan and Kenis, 2008). Wang *et al.* (2023, p.1187) stated that 'Typologically, governance could be depicted as networks' as there is the involvement of multiple actors all working to achieve collective goals that could not be accomplished by individuals, and that there are usually mutual exchanges between the public sector and other sectors. Grix and Phillpots (2011) tied this back to network governance because of New Labour's modernisation initiatives and as a way to get actors from different sectors to co-operate to achieve governmental objectives.

Rhodes (1997) defined networks as having a level of interdependence but that there is a need to share resources and have a shared purpose due to the blurring of boundaries between the sectors. These networks have a significant level of autonomy from the state, but the state can still influence the running of these networks. There is a co-existence in practice of new public management and new public governance, where the networks simultaneously work to achieve metrics set by a more hierarchical government. There are however several considerations to be taken when government and other sectors are working within networks

regarding setting boundaries to clarify who will take which role, the importance of the project and whether there are any winners and losers (Chadwick, 2022). The voluntary sector can be good value for money for governmental bodies looking at ways to reduce costs, however if there is an over-reliance on the volunteer sector to do what the public sector previously did, there is a risk 'of exploiting the fundamental altruism and freedom in the giving of one's time and money as a gift' (Evans, 2011, p.166).

Bryson, Crosby and Stone (2006) acknowledge that many academics view cross-sector collaborations as networks but may therefore not be accessing the dynamic nature and uniqueness of the collaboration between different types of organisations. There is clearly some overlap between the principles of collaborative and network governance. Collaborative governance, however, is complex with fragmentation that reveals emergent and existing relationships rather than a functional network.

3.2.7 Collaborative Governance

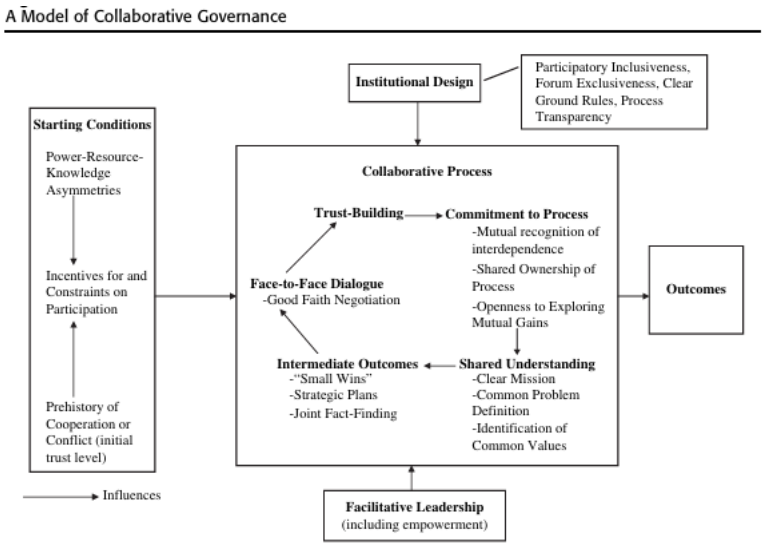
Collaborative governance reflects the key principles of policymaking and provision of service whilst engaging collective action from stakeholders (including private, public and voluntary sectors). Whilst collaborative governance has roots firmly in public administration Shilbury and Ferkins (2015) argue that collaborative governance has relevance in the sporting landscape, especially where sport is supported by government funding and policy. O'Boyle and Shilbury (2016) also support this thinking in that organisations involved in sport are not usually dictated by a National Governing Body but wider influences and that sports organisations usually work towards similar objectives and outcomes. Sport networks/ federations and governing bodies need to consider ways to govern collaboratively with members and wider organisations to have a whole sport approach (Shilbury, O'Boyle and Ferkins, 2020). Ospina (2016) wrote about how the growth of collaborative governance has resulted in leaders needing to consider ways to develop supportive and inclusive environments for collaboration.

Ansell and Gash (2008, p.544) formally define collaborative governance as 'a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programmes or assets'. Ansell

and Gash (2007) argue that as knowledge becomes progressively specialised, and institutions become more complex, the demand for collaboration rises.

As part of the same research Ansell and Gash (2008, p550) developed the model seen in Figure 7 which has four main variables - starting conditions , institutional design, facilitative leadership and collaborative process.

Figure 7 A model of Collaborative Governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008)



Ansell and Gash (2008: p. 550) explain each variable as: *Starting conditions* 'set the basic level of trust, conflict, and social capital that become resources or liabilities during collaboration'. *Institutional Design* are 'the basic ground rules under which coloration takes place'. *Leadership* 'provides essential mediation and facilitation for the collaborative process'. The *Collaborative Process* at the very centre of the model 'is highly iterative and non-linear…represented as a cycle' and includes 'trust building, commitment to process, shared understanding, intermediate outcomes and face-to-face dialogue'.

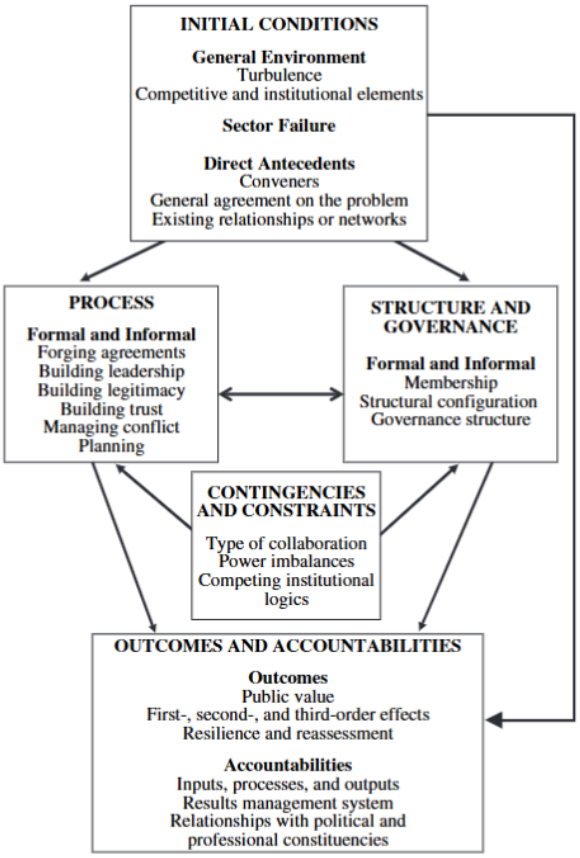
Shilbury and Ferkins (2015: p.394) adapted the Ansell and Gash (2008) model arguing that the model's focus on key actors and collaborative decision making had the potential to 'reshape governance behaviours'. In more contemporary research McNaught's (2024: p.3) application of the Ansell and Gash (2008) model in climate and disaster resilience development was created as a way to gain better understanding of 'the characteristics and outcomes of collaborative governance'. The paper found that soft skills and skilled facilitation are important to connect actors across different levels and ensure effective collaborative

governance. The study found that there are benefits of the collaborative governance approach but there is a need to create spaces for interaction and implementation for the multiple stakeholders.

Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) found that implementation of collaborative governance requires lots of individuals coming together, but that this will be through complex interactions which require a high level of networking. Therefore, in collaborative governance, emphasis is placed on consensus building rather than top-down decision making. There is also a focus on the citizens and marginalised groups, aiming for equitable representation and giving voice to divergent interests rather than efficiencies being at the forefront.

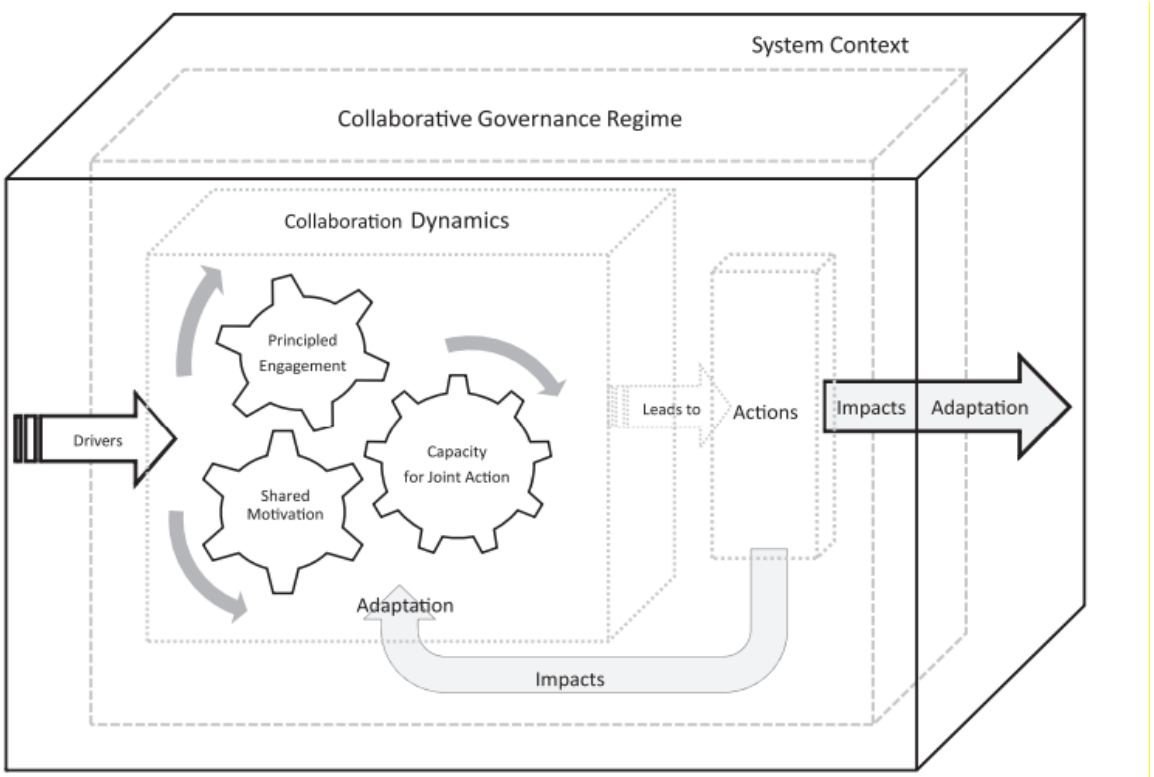
Bryson, Crosby and Stone's (2006: p44) research focused on cross sector collaboration which they define as 'the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately'. As part of this research, they developed an organizing framework (See Figure 8) to categorise the literature on collaborations. This framework included sections on 'initial conditions, process dimensions, structural and governance dimensions, contingencies and constraints, outcomes, and ac-countability issues'.

Figure 8 A framework for understanding cross sector collaborations, Bryson et al (2006: p44)



Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh (2012) collated and extended the literature on collaborative governance to create an integrative framework which provides a conceptual map for exploring elements of collaborative governance. The model places importance on the institutional elements whether formal or informal and how they enable and constrain collaborative governance. The concept of a cross-governance regime is a central feature in the framework (See Figure 9).

Figure 9: The Integrative Framework for Collaborative Governance (Emerson, 2012, p.6)



Bianchi, Nasi and Rivenbark (2021) discussed how there is widening literature in the area of collaborative governance, but it is still developing as a field of knowledge and practice. This is confirmed by the variations in terminology and concepts seen within the literature, such as networks (Rhodes, 2017), collaboration (Ansell and Gash, 2007), partnership, cross-sector working (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006). There is also use of mixed terminology within practice 'implying affinities, differences, and connections among them' (Bianchi, Nasi and Rivenbark, 2021, p.1582). The common themes between the different terminology are usually the involvement of multiple actors and agencies from a range of sectors who all come together to implement a policy with sustainable outcomes for a particular group or sector of society. Wegrich (2019) claimed that issues that usually temper collaboration are usually down to issues within an organisation, such as bureaucracy or leadership. However, Sam (2009) summarised that it is a wide paradigm, and collaborative governance is limited by a variety of factors relating to inequalities, trust, and power imbalances and leadership failures.

Partnership working often involves cross-sectoral collaborations and aligns closely with other governance frameworks such as NPG, collaborative governance and network governance focusing on plurality and alliance building amongst a diverse range of partners. Sport England launched twelve Local Delivery Pilots to explore place-based working and to support whole-system approaches using National Lottery and Exchequer funding. These pilots were a way to let selected Active Partnerships build collaborative and cross-collaborative relationships with local organisations and leaders to break down barriers to physical activity (Sport England, 2023c). This type of collaborative governance pushes more for grassroots participation to engage local communities, for example Ansell and Gash (2008, p.561) claimed 'if we govern collaboratively, we may avoid the high costs of adversarial policy making, expand democratic participation, and even restore rationality to public management.' Gray and Wood (1991) also found that collaborative work can become a strategy for organisations to access support with the challenges of an unstable environment or where there are external pressures.

Lefebvre, Zeimers and Zintz (2023: p. 429) found that their research built on previous collaborative governance research stating that within the not-for-profit sport context that highlighted interdependency between clubs and national sporting organisations being 'particularly crucial if federations need clubs to implement their sport strategy and policies, but also clubs depend on federations for such things as competition opportunities, insurance, learning programmes for club leaders and coaches or subsidies'.

Bianchi, Nasi and Rivenbark (2021) discussed policy delivery in the context of partnership between governmental bodies and national partners and how this type of governance is advocated as a way to solve *wicked* problems, yet failure can still occur due to the need for more leadership support at a strategic level, particularly when dealing with diverse partners. Partnership working does require a change in mindset from sport governing bodies to facilitate the development of the partnership. This, therefore, requires the partners to develop trust and collaboration through shared norms, especially if there is a requirement to deliver public policy and influence policy (Pollitt, 2009). Jessop's (2004) concept of meta-governance or the '*governance of governance'* (Jessop, 1998) addresses issues with governance failure and can be applied within collaborative governance mechanisms as a way to manage complex inter organisational and inter sector relationships. Ansell and Gash (2008) talk about the importance of agencies as well as institutions. In complex collaborative

governance arrangements however, effective communication, resource flow and inclusion depend upon resilience in both institutions and agencies. Such complexity in collaborative governance therefore demands effecting meta-governance (Jessop, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2015; McNaught, 2024).

Equally, social capital plays a key role in collaborative, networked or partnership working, as trust, relationships and social networks all contribute to effective ways of working. There is a belief that the voluntary sector contributes heavily to the development of social capital through fostering trust, civil engagement and community cohesion which can lead to enhanced effectiveness within forms of collaborative governance, NPG and network governance (Brown, 2004). VSCs can foster a sense of community, shared identity and civic pride amongst the participants, spectators, and volunteers, yet Holmes (2009), Hooghe and Stolle (2003) Musick and Wilson (2000) all commented that evidence for volunteering making any contribution to social capital and developing an increasing sense of citizenship is mixed. Some social networks can be viewed as closed systems (Kadushin, 2012). However, there is usually an emergence of effective norms where members can work within these norms and impose sanctions if necessary (Coleman, 1988). In some open networks, like we see in governance structures and sports networks, it is possible that some members have no contact with others within the network, and Sam (2009) warns of individual stakeholders holding all the power leading to a manipulation and distrust of the collaborative governance process.

In terms of recommendations for future research Shilbury and Ferkins (2015, 2018) have suggested that the elements of the Ansell and Gash (2008) model of collaborative governance could be explored in more depth. Consequently, collaborative governance is the more appropriate lens to examine the uniqueness of how volunteer management delivers sport and physical activity objectives. The remainder of this thesis therefore employs collaborative governance as the primary theoretical lens, drawing particularly on Ansell and Gash's (2008) model with its emphasis on starting conditions, institutional design, leadership, and collaborative processes. This framework provides the most comprehensive approach for analysing the empirical findings from the GM City Region’s sports volunteering landscape, while still acknowledging the contributions of related governance perspectives outlined above.

3.3 Navigating Challenges

During the period this thesis has taken place, the sport and voluntary sectors have also been impacted by the wider challenges and polycrisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, austerity, cost of living crisis and widening political instability. The concept of a polycrisis refers to the convergence and compounding of multiple complex global crises happening simultaneously including climate change, energy shortages, economic instability, political polarization, health pandemics etc. Hartley, Kuecker and Woo, (2019, p.164) support this view stating that 'In the twenty-first century, the global community will be confronted with a 'perfect storm of global crises'. Henig and Knight (2023, p.3) commented that 'numerous attempts have been made to provide analytic frameworks to capture the world in systemic transition'. Kuecker (2007, 2014) believed these crises to be a combination of climate change, ecological degradation, food and water insecurity, emergent pandemics, and demographic shifts. Tooze (2022) introduced the terminology 'polycrisis' to readers of the Financial Times, arguing that we are currently faced with multiple simultaneous crises of a nature so severe that there is no longer a singular fix for these cascading crises. The majority of these crises are coming from lenses such as 'migration, finance, energy and politics, and are too extensive to list here (Masco, 2017)' (Henig and Knight 2023, p.3). The Implications for governance include policy challenges which require an integrated agile and flexible response from structures which are fragmented. Henig and Knight (2023, p.5) go onto discuss whether the terminology polycrisis could actually be a 'catch-all container where complexity goes to die'. According to Hartley, Kuecker and Woo (2019, p.164) this culmination of crises has all the characteristics of 'wicked problems'. Chadwick (2022, p.685) explains these crises and fast paced developments within sport as 'giga-changes' and the effects of these gig-changes will be felt across marketisation, leadership, policy development and in day-to-day life.

Mills *et al.* (2022, p. 2213-4) discussed how 'sports clubs are subject to a range of external pressures' but were still well placed to support with policy implementation. For the sports volunteering sector specifically, economic troubles will result in funding cuts across sport, physical activity and leisure, but simultaneously community needs will grow, increasing demand for services delivered by volunteers (Hayton and Walker, 2018). This strains the willingness and capacity to mobilise volunteers amidst growing polycrisis pressures on personal time, finances and mental bandwidth, limiting ability to commit hours freely (Milora,

2022). Governance and policies enabling volunteering structures to recruit, retain and reward volunteers may also be impacted. There is one school of thought that these types of challenges can enable individual actors and communities to respond to unmet social needs through community and volunteering action (Ansell *et al*., 2021) as a way of disruptive innovation that was particularly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. Clayton, Christensen and McDonald (2002) discuss how across every organisation where there is growth and stories of success, these are usually instigated by disruptive innovation and 'therefore, it has great significance.' (Si and Chen, 2020, p.16).

The concept of disruptive innovation, pioneered by Christensen (1995) has relevance for public and voluntary sector governance. Christensen *et al*. (2015) reclarified the terminology believing that the phrasing disruptive innovation could be ambiguous when referring to products and services at one moment in time, rather than using the terminology to review those products and services over a lifecycle. Nagy *et al.* (2016) also supported this viewpoint from the original authors and believed that the multiple crises and fragmentation of governance could cause the framework to be adversely affected, and that the term needed further clarification. This approach has since been redeveloped and discussed widely (Christensen *et al.,* 2018) but recognises that public institutions and policies can also be vulnerable to disruptive innovation. Si and Chen (2020) in a literature review of the theory found that despite further development, there was still a need to go back and confirm the original theory or prevent further confusion with how the concept is applied. Digital technology is also a conduit for disruption which could enable greater access for wider communities and force adaptations to governance structures (Dunleavey *et al*., 2005).

Public sector governance and voluntary organisations use methods of disruptive innovation such as assessing vulnerabilities relating to what services or community programs are at risk, identifying priorities and leveraging new technology. Essentially it is an opportunity to cultivate institutional agility, citizen-centricity, and networks to enable collaborative regeneration (Wang *et al.,* 2021). Due to the ongoing turbulence and crises, Chadwick (2022) argues that all recognised ways of working within the sports sector will be tested and that there needs to be changes in ways of working to respond to all the changes the sector is facing. Within the public and sports volunteering sectors, disruptive innovation can be witnessed through the development of partner alliances with a variety of partners across all

sectors to expand the community offer, through the use of technology to support volunteering, and responding more flexibly to volunteering models such as micro-volunteering (Paylor, 2012).

Si and Chen (2020) commented that there were a number of other academics and some practitioners who found that disruptive innovation was being used to evaluate examples after the effect, rather than as a way to predict behaviour or success, and as such the theory had been diminished. Hartley, Kuecker and Woo (2019, p.177) discuss how important it is that policy makers and theorists must ensure that policy responses to concepts like polycrisis (Henig and Knight, 2023) or giga-changes (Chadwick, 2022) are suitable, otherwise it is a 'disservice to scholarly interdisciplinarity and at peril to policy practice and humanity itself'. With a similar viewpoint Chadwick (2022, p.685) discusses that this period is 'one of the most important periods in human history'.

3.3.1 Governance and Covid

During early 2020, the global Covid-19 pandemic exposed systems of governance across multiple sectors, with the sports sector experiencing complete shutdown of clubs, events, and businesses (Giulianotti and Collison, 2020; Grix *et al*., 2021). Individual organisations across private, public, and voluntary sectors faced unprecedented uncertainty, leading to increased collaborative and network governance approaches as traditional hierarchical responses proved inadequate.

The pandemic's impact on sports volunteering was particularly complex. While most volunteering roles were suspended during lockdowns, demand increased for community support volunteers in areas such as food delivery and health support (Dederichs, 2022). Institutional frailty was exposed unevenly across the sector, with some voluntary sports clubs supported by local authorities while others received no compensation for lost revenues (Evans et al., 2020). Recovery capacity varied significantly based on organisations' ability to draw on assets, resources, and external networks (Doherty, Millar and Misener, 2022). Research by Nichols, Reid and Findlay-King (2023) demonstrated how community sports clubs developed mutual aid responses to meet broader community needs through collaborative approaches.

The pandemic accelerated technological innovation, with voluntary sports clubs deploying digital tools for remote service delivery and community engagement through online activities

(Grix, 2021). However, most recovery directives remained top-down from public health policy or governing bodies, often failing to account for local environments and requiring grassroots organizations to adapt guidelines to suit their communities (Doherty, Miller and Misener, 2022). A significant concern remains the loss of both established volunteers and potential new recruits, with around a quarter of the workforce leaving the sports sector during the pandemic (DCMS, 2023b), highlighting the need for collaborative approaches to rebuilding volunteer capacity.

3.4 Chapter Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the theoretical development from traditional public administration through New Public Management (NPM) and New Public Governance (NPG) toward collaborative governance approaches, establishing the foundation for understanding sports volunteering delivery mechanisms. This review of theoretical frameworks demonstrated how governance has evolved from hierarchical, market-based models toward more networked, collaborative arrangements that recognize the interdependencies between public, private, and voluntary sector actors (Rhodes, 1996; Hood, 2011; Elliott *et al*., 2022).

This evolution has particular significance for sports volunteering, where traditional management approaches have proven inadequate for addressing the complex, multi-stakeholder relationships that characterize contemporary sports volunteering. The review revealed that while NPM modernised voluntary sector practices, successive 'polycrises' have accelerated the shift toward collaborative governance models that better accommodate the voluntary sector's role in public service ecosystems (Elliott *et al*., 2022). However, significant gaps remain in understanding how collaborative governance operates specifically within sports volunteering contexts and city region environments.

The emergence of what Dickinson in Butcher and Gilchrist (2016: p.55) describes as 'hybrid arrangements comprising features of different forms of governance systems' necessitates new theoretical frameworks for understanding collaborative relationships in sports volunteering. The fragmented nature of contemporary governance creates both challenges and opportunities for voluntary sports organizations, requiring innovative approaches to multi-stakeholder engagement and shared decision-making (Reiter and Klenk, 2019; Osborne *et al.*, 2022).

This theoretical foundation establishes collaborative governance as the most appropriate framework for examining sports volunteering in Greater Manchester, where devolved governance structures, diverse organizational partnerships, and complex community needs require collaborative rather than hierarchical approaches to volunteer engagement and service delivery. The following chapter will examine how collaborative governance theory can be applied to understand and enhance sports volunteering practices within this dynamic regional context.

Chapter Four Greater Manchester City Region

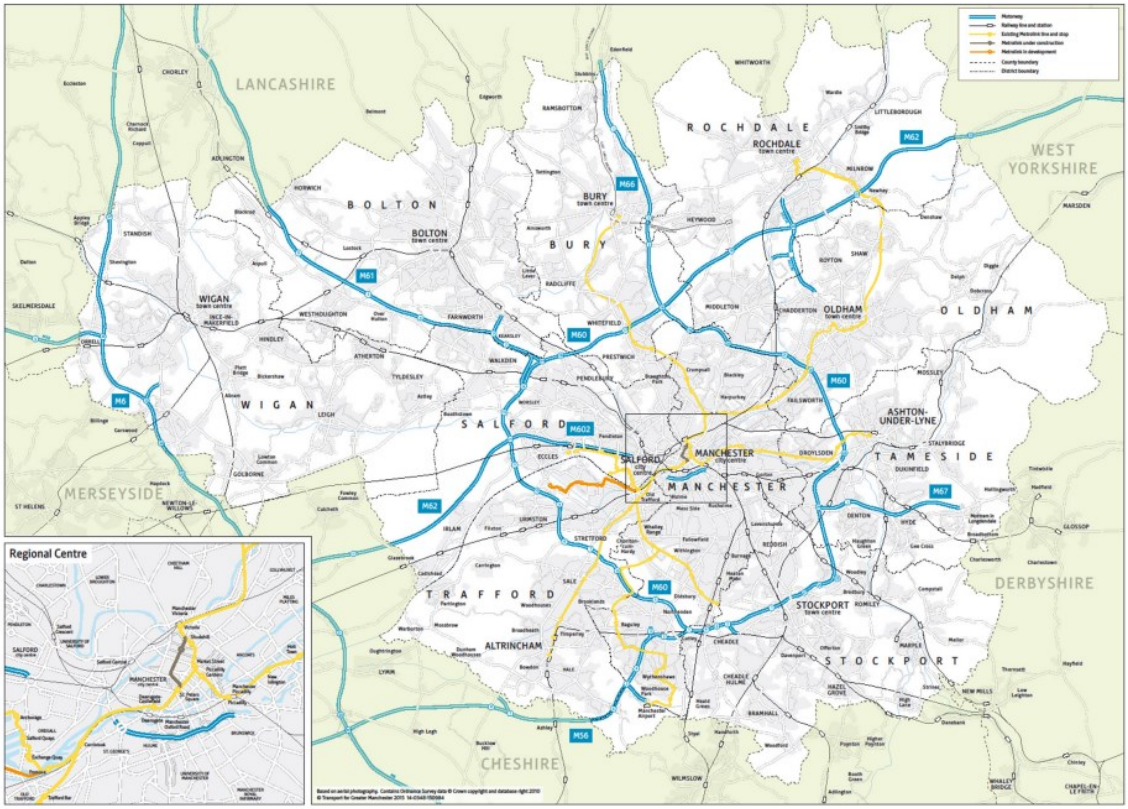
4.0 – Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter will frame the area of focus for the research within Greater Manchester (GM) by examining the development of GM as a City Region, the development of GM as a metropolitan combined authority, the complexity of the many actors within the GM space and how volunteering in sport fits into this governance model. This chapter will also set the scene for how sport and volunteering are situated within GM. The region includes Manchester, the second largest city in the United Kingdom, which has a rich history rooted in its development as an industrial metropolis with revolutionary and progressive histories and sees itself as the 'linchpin' that holds the region together to promote growth and development using the adopted marketable slogan of *This is Manchester, we do things differently around here'* (Manchester City Council, 2023). The region also has a strong cultural identity tied to sport, arts and music, and there is a clear strategy to boost the profile of the region further internationally over the coming 10 years (GMCA, 2022). Misener and Mason (2009) in their research into the City Regions of Manchester and Melbourne found that sport was used as a strategy for regeneration, but also had the added benefits of marketing and promotion of the City Region through a form of mythic Manchester celebrating local heroes (Haughton *et al.*, 2016). The region and city GMs political leaders are proud of their collaborative legacy having worked together over a 25-year period prior to the formalisation of the GMCA in 2011, and then continued to work collaboratively in the years following (Kenealy, 2016).

4.1 City Region

Greater Manchester (GM) is a metropolitan combined authority made up of the ten borough councils of Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan and the two cities of Manchester and Salford (10GM, 2023). These ten metropolitan boroughs cross over three counties – Lancashire, Cheshire, and Yorkshire (Harding, 2020) (See Figure 10). According to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) the City Region has an economy bigger than Wales, with a population of 2.8 million (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2023).

Figure 10: Greater Manchester Districts and Urban Form (Harding, 2020, p.10)



The population of the Greater Manchester City Region (GMCR) has an aging population, with the working age population only expected to grow by 15%, compared with 50% for the over 65s (The Independent Prosperity Review, 2022). The Greater Manchester Strategy (GMCA, 2021, p.6) comments that this 'represents the biggest demographic shift facing the City Region over the next few decades and will impact on all areas of life from health, to work, to education/reskilling, to culture, leisure and travel'. GM as a conurbation is very unequal in how inequality is distributed. Manchester City ranks highly with the number of deprived areas. Marmot (2021, p.3) confirms that 'in GM, the link between deprivation and life expectancy was clear. Rank the 10 cities of GM from most deprived, Manchester, to least deprived, Trafford, and there was a close correlation with life expectancy, in the years 2017–2019'. GM generally has worse health outcomes than the UK average (although life expectancy is improving) and varies across the ten boroughs (The Independent Prosperity Review, 2022). Manchester also has almost double the number of children living in poverty in comparison to the rest of the UK (Access Sport, 2023). The GM mayor and other Labour political leaders have long argued that austerity measures and cost of living has affected

residents in GM and other northern conurbations disproportionally to other areas in the UK (Johnson *et al.,* 2023).

The literature shows that City Regions and their associated politics have been debated for well over two decades (Jonas, 2013; Hodson *et al.,* 2020; Levar and Sonnino, 2022). Watson (2021) discussed how City Regions are defined in terms of their connections on economic, social and institutional levels, and this is certainly demonstrated with the GM exemplar. According to Kitchen and Moore-Cherry (2021), debates are usually focused on the extent of rapidly growing cities, impact on the environment, space, or the politics of the governance of the City Regions. Thompson, Southern and Heap (2022) commented that although there has been a rise of the City Region concept within 'new regionalism' studies such as those by Beel, Jones and Jones (2016) and Rodríguez-Pose (2008), there has been limited research into wider impacts of the City Region. There are certainly limited City Region studies based in sports volunteering. Any academic research tends to focus on the branding of the big professional clubs within the City Region, or mega/major events held within the region which, while there has been focus on volunteering, this has been limited to event volunteers rather than the wider community and VSC volunteers. Manchester has seen several regeneration phases, such as the regeneration following the challenges faced by the bombing of the city centre in 1996 (Williams, 2000) and the regeneration of East Manchester (Blakeley and Evans, 2009) as part of the 1993 and 2000 Olympic bids and the 2002 Commonwealth Games (Carlson and Taylor, 2003; Nichols and Ralston, 2011). Whitelegg (2000) found that sport has been used to improve urban image in Greater Manchester and other City Regions.

The role of place within sports volunteering management is important in building a sense of identity (Tonts and Atherley, 2010). Relph (1985: p26) define place attachment as 'constructed in our memories and affections through repeated encounters and complex associations'.

4.1.1 Development of City Region Governance

During the late 1960s the Labour Government who were in power at that time had previously commissioned a report – the Redcliffe-Maud Report to review the structure of local government and propose recommendations for new local authority boundaries considering the size and shape of the areas. One of these proposals was to create a metropolitan area

including Manchester and some of Lancashire and Cheshire (Jones, 1973). The Conservative Government then came into power in 1970 and used some of the findings of the Redcliffe-Maud Report to create new local government systems through a Local Government Act. The resulting Local Government Act 1972 began the process of adopting the structure of a metropolitan region and adopting collaborative agreements for infrastructure and regeneration (Ward *et al.,* 2015). The Greater Manchester Council (GMC) was then created in 1974 as a metropolitan county with the ten districts of Bury, Bolton, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan. During this period the GMC worked within a background of tension between the involved local authorities and amidst a challenging political climate where the ruling Conservative Party were unsympathetic to GM's Labour-led metropolitan style of governance (Ward *et al.,* 2015). Harding (2020) found that the legacy that emerged from this local government reform contributed to a bottom-up type of regionalism which influenced central government and features heavily in the development of the GM region.

In 1985 the Local Government Act abolished the metropolitan county councils, meaning that power from the GMC was delegated back to the ten councils. There was, however, a recognition that some of those functions needed more strategic coordination across the metropolitan region (Deas, 2014). The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) was subsequently developed in 1986 as a voluntary organisation to represent the interests of the metropolitan region (although without any statutory status) and bring the region's council and local government leaders together under one umbrella. Ward *et al*., (2015, p.418) confirmed that the development from GMC to AGMA 'was vital in fostering intergovernmental cohesion and joint policy-making capacity'. AGMA picked up most of the existing work of the GMC work coordinating issues which affect all localities such as economic development, planning, transport and regeneration. During the 1990s a change in central leadership to a Labour-led government ensured that developments such as the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) (alongside other northern regional development agencies) provided renewed energy to focus on infrastructure and transport (Sørensen and Gudmundsson, 2010). During the 2000s, due to the 2008 recession AGMA began to seek a more formal governance structure using the terminology Manchester City Region and pooling resources as a Combined Authority (CA).

4.1.2 Devolution

In the midst of a growing financial crisis during 2007-2008 caused by predatory lending and excessive risk-taking by global financial institutions, AGMA bid to be awarded a City Region Pilot status by Gordon Brown's Labour Government, highlighting the benefits in overcoming the financial crisis (Deas, Haughton and Ward, 2020). The ten councils' history of successfully working collaboratively together as the GMC, and then AGMA contributed to the success of this initial devolution-style bid. This was formally announced as part of the 2009 budget and enabled the combined authority for GM to be created as a devolved statutory power. As part of this process the Coalition Government replaced AGMA in 2011 with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). In 2012 the Greater Manchester City Deal was awarded whereby the GMCA gained devolved resources, powers, and a governance structure. Due to the good working relationships between the boroughs through the AGMA, the Local Enterprise Partnership was easily formed to create the constitution that all the boroughs could work within (Pugalis and Townsend, 2012; Harding, 2020). The City Deal not only brought together the ten boroughs but also the twelve Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), NHS managers, regulators and the Council for Voluntary Organisations (CVO) as a way to improve health outcomes in the region through the outsourcing of services which could include voluntary organisations who had remit for sport and physical activity (Kenealy, 2016).

In 2014, the Coalition Government, with George Osborne as Chancellor, had desires to restructure local government. This, alongside the history of collaborative working between the ten local authorities, led to the devolution agreement known as *Devo Manc* deal (Ward et al., 2015, Kenealy, 2016). This transfer of powers to a new elected Greater Manchester Mayor and the ten GMCA leaders, gave the region additional powers and accountability in areas such as transport, planning, housing, and extra budgets for skills training, getting people back to work and to support and develop local business (Beel *et al*., 2018; Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2023). Hodson *et al*. (2020, p.213) concluded that 'the process of constituting the GM City Region has been a long-term project of both UK state interests and of local political and business interests.'

Seven deals were added to the original devolution agreement, including the 'unprecedented' £6billion health and social care deal in February 2015 (Manchester Evening News, 2015). It

was at this point that health and wellbeing (now tied closely to sport) came to the forefront of policy with an ambition to achieve the 'greatest and fastest improvement to the health, wealth and wellbeing of the 2.8 million people in the towns and cities of Greater Manchester' (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2015, p.2). There was some criticism of the Manchester model of devolution around the apparent inequality of development across all of GM. Deas, Haughton and Ward (2021, p.186) discuss how a second draft of GM's plan for homes, jobs and the environment (GMSF) in 2018 made a 'clearer commitment to distribute growth more evenly, and recognition of the needs of the City Region's 'left-behind places'. Beel *et al.* (2017, p.566) also discussed how it was important to 'bring together the appropriate voices within the City Region to address the problems of inequality faced by the region'.

A new 'trailblazer' (GMCA, 2023) deal was agreed in March 2023, focused on local decision-making through additional powers, financial freedoms, and new accountability arrangements (GMCA, 2023). Hayley Lever, the Executive Lead for GM Moving (the newly termed Active Partnership in a rebrand from Greater Sport), commented that this deal will be an 'opportunity for GM Moving partners to make an even bigger difference…as we support good lives for all' (Lever, 2023). Through this deal there are opportunities for DCMS and Sport England to work with various partners in the region with greater funding allocated.

Greater Manchester (GM) is seen as an 'exemplar of devolution' (Hodson *et al.,* 2020, p.200), 'best practice' (Ayres, 2022: p 30), and Deas Haughton and Ward (2021, p.182) commented that 'the much-lauded Manchester model is a mixture of multiple, inter-woven approaches linked to devolved decision making and local public service reform, as well as economic development'. These views have meant that the GMCA was granted additional control over policy areas (Ayres, 2022). This type of commentary and feedback fits with the GM story, telling of pride and success in their growth and development. However, there are views that the leaders within the GM region may be seen in the future as having been willing to absorb costs as way to gain power (Haughton *et al*., 2016)

4.1.3 Northern Powerhouse

Alongside the devolution process, in 2014 the government announced its aspiration to create a Northern Powerhouse economy as a way to rebalance the North-South divide (Haughton *et al*., 2016; Lee, 2017). The Northern Powerhouse built on previous strategy such as the 2004

Northern Way collaboration which aimed to work across eight major conurbations (Lee, 2017). The strategy emerged during 2016 as a way for the government to address barriers to productivity by engaging with local stakeholders through the creation of a local northern city network (Haughton *et al.*, 2016; Northern Powerhouse, 2023; Fransham *et al*., 2023). Beel, Jones and Jones (2018, p.2) described it as 'a coordinating frame for City Regions in the north of England in terms of their interaction with each other, we are interested in understanding how these bodies are being shaped by devolution'. GM's Northern Powerhouse strategy's main focus has been to improve the regional transport links leading to agglomeration and to take advantage of the network leading to a recent productivity resurgence (Gilmour, Emerich and O'Connell, 2023).

There have been debates around the Northern Powerhouse and its usefulness in affecting change. Fransham *et al*. (2023, p.3) describe the Northern Powerhouse as another of 'these buzzword strategies [which] were essentially a way of bringing together disparate policies.' Lee (2017) found that while the Northern Powerhouse is policy agenda, it does not have any strategic planning or confirmed remit, leading to a level of 'fuzziness' for the geographical region, planning and leadership. Currently

4.1.4 Levelling Up

As a way to win votes from traditional Labour 'Red Wall' areas in the Midlands and northern England, Boris Johnson, during his 2019 General Election strategy, mentioned 'levelling up' of these areas, although never really confirming what it was or how it would be implemented (Tomaney and Pike, 2021). Johnson later provided more detail in a speech on the New Deal for Britain, which stated that the Conservative Government at that time 'have a mission to unite and to level up' (UK Government, 2020). This was as a response to the fact that following the pandemic and the economic downturn there was 'impact unequally across the UK, with many of the left behind being severely affected' (Evanhuis *et al*., 2021, p.8). Comparisons to the German reunification programme where there was investment to level up East Germany, the pace at which East Germany increased productivity and closed the gap between it and West Germany, have been made, and yet spending comparisons show the German investment into *Aufbau Ost* was significantly higher than any UK investment currently provided (Martin *et al*., 2022).

The GMCA (2019, p.65) developed the Greater Manchester Model, a White Paper which aimed to unify public services across GM, stating 'residents can expect a flexible and all-inclusive response from a unified public service that is set up to respond to the reality of their lives'. A Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper (2022) quickly followed, and GM developed a GM levelling up deal which was set to improve transportation, become carbon neutral, improve the attractiveness of the region to live, work and set up businesses, and to create further training opportunities and jobs (About Greater Manchester, 2023).

The Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper contained promises to improve civil society, social infrastructure, and community power, but Young (2023) commented that as practitioners in the voluntary sector it is 'hard to see how entrenched inequalities will be reversed without significant, sustained long term funding'. There have certainly been challenges to the delivery of the Levelling Up agenda, successive governments have not been able to clarify which economic problems it will solve, and there is a lack of metrics to develop detailed policy (Tomany and Pike, 2021). Johnson *et al.* (2023, p.507) critiqued the Levelling Up agenda, in that it 'downplays entrenched geographical inequalities within City Regions and between different ethnic and social groups.' The Levelling Up White Paper made little reference to sport or volunteering other than to mention that sports facilities were reduced in areas of low social capital, and that volunteering has strong benefits which could be developed through access to the Volunteering Futures Fund (HM Government, 2022). Gordon Brown chaired The Labour Party's Commission on the UK's Future, and while he recognised that devolved power varied between localities, there were key areas of focus for the devolved powers, including skills and education, employment, culture and sport (Connolly and Pyper, 2023). Brown confirmed the commitment to sport in a statement that 'Local sports clubs are lifelines for communities. Any central government funding for grassroots sport should be facilitated by local leaders and organisations who know their area best' (Brown, 2022, p. 80).

4.2 Sport in Greater Manchester

The decline of the traditional industries in GM during the 60s and 70s amidst a period of widespread deprivation and a lack of volunteering, led to a response from Manchester City Council to promote and enhance the region's profile often using sport to do this. Smith (2005, p.221) explained that 'post-industrial cities often have long-established associations with sport events, high-profile teams, and stadia'. Greater Manchester is well known for sporting

teams with teams in the top and lower tiers of a variety of sports. The bid during the mid-1990s for the Olympic Games, resulting in the eventual award of the 2002 Commonwealth Games, demonstrated that Manchester City Council could 'talk the language of entrepreneurial growth to secure public grants, it also symbolised their ambitions to transform local governance and urban politics' (Lorne *et al.,* 2020, p.318).

4.2.1 Development of Sport City and Event Culture

GM Sports policy during the late 1990s and early 2000s developed as a way to invest in grassroots sports clubs, signalling that sport at both ends of the spectrum needed investment and support. This included investment in volunteering within the sports sector, particularly as a response to the growth in coaching and due to the success of the 2002 Commonwealth Games volunteering scheme and the development of the Volunteer Investment programme (VIP) (Nichols and Ralston, 2012).

The repurposing of the Commonwealth Games Stadium to become the Manchester City FC Stadium has led to regeneration of the east of Manchester (Misener and Mason, 2009). This area is now home to a National Cycling Centre and several NGB head offices, creating a hub of sports activity, a physical space termed 'Sportcity' (DCMS/Manchester City Council, 2002; Pye, Cuskelly and Toohey, 2016). The legacy from the 2002 Commonwealth Games continued into London 2012 (Nichols and Ralston, 2012) with a strong volunteer programme and Pre-Volunteer Programme (PVP), and events held within GM parameters (Mountain Biking and Football) ensuring that Manchester continued to attract major events and was seen as a strong sport city. Manchester currently ranks as the 5th best sporting city across the globe in the sport city 2023 rankings, which recognises cities perceived to be most associated with sport (BCW, 2023). GMM (2023) stated that there has always been a 'strong foundation of a well-connected physical activity and sport system, with high performing leisure and cultural trusts and the Active Partnership'.

There was a clear commitment to invest in major events, and the city has bid for and hosted several major events since that period. Misener and Mason (2009) found that Manchester developed and focused their sporting event strategy as part of a local growth agenda and to focus on urban revitalisation to redevelop and revitalise the city and surrounding GM area. Findings also showed that one continued legacy from the event strategy was that volunteer

support was integral to ensuring the interests of communities and local people (Misener and Mason, 2009).

4.2.2 Leisure Trusts and Asset Transfer

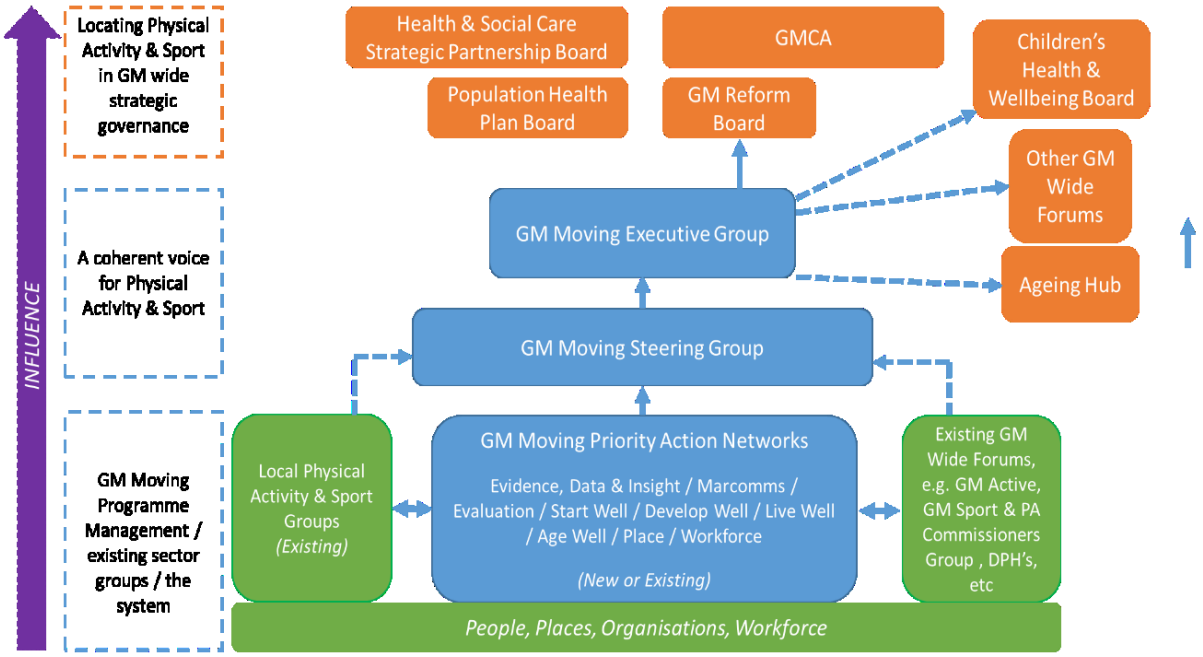
During the 2010s, in response to the modernisation and NPM agenda, local councils began to transfer assets to Leisure Trusts as a way to improve performance and investment, and to reduce the tax burden. In GM many of the council-owned facilities transferred to Leisure Trusts such as GLL, and volunteers were recruited into governance roles within the new trusts (Findlay-King *et al*., 2018). One example of this with GM is Withington Baths, which was saved from closure in 2015. During the period where GM were looking to transfer assets, a community owned charity 'Love Withington Baths' was created to save the facility and took over the running of the baths. Findlay-King *et al.'s* (2018) empirical work found that these types of volunteer-led groups had more autonomy and flexibility to make decisions to meet local needs but may still require some level of local authority financial support.

4.2.3 Organisations to support Sport in GM

Funding of sport in GM comes from a number of sources. Each city or borough council contributes to the development of sport in their locality, but funding is mainly via Treasury and Lottery funding to Sport England, and then to the Active Partnership 'Greater Manchester Moving' (GMM). There is a GMM Executive group with representatives from Sport England, GMCA, TFGM, GM Integrated Care Partnership (GMICP), GM Active and 10GM, who all lead and support the strategy *GM Moving in Action* 2021-2031 - *Active Lives for All*. This strategy uses strong language around collective action, connectivity and togetherness across the region (GMM, 2021). 'Everyone has a role to play in GM Moving; people, communities and organisations, from every sector and place across the City Region, pulling in the same direction and with a shared goal to help people move more' (GMM, 2021, p.2). There is an acknowledgement in the strategy of the Covid-19 pandemic and resurgence of Black Lives Matter, and how important listening and co-creation is, with the mantra 'nothing about us, without us' (GMM, 2021, p.19). The strategy confirms that all this work is under the umbrella of a changing landscape 'there is much that is currently uncertain and hard to predict. This strategy is to be used as a guiding compass' (GMM, 2021, p.35). GMM is also part of a wider Sport and Physical Activity governance structure (See Figure 11, Lever, 2017) which points to a deliberate collaborative architecture rather than as stand-alone organisations. The

landscape is complex, and it is difficult to include all organisations involved in sport and physical activity within the region, however the VCSE sector voice is missing from this architecture.

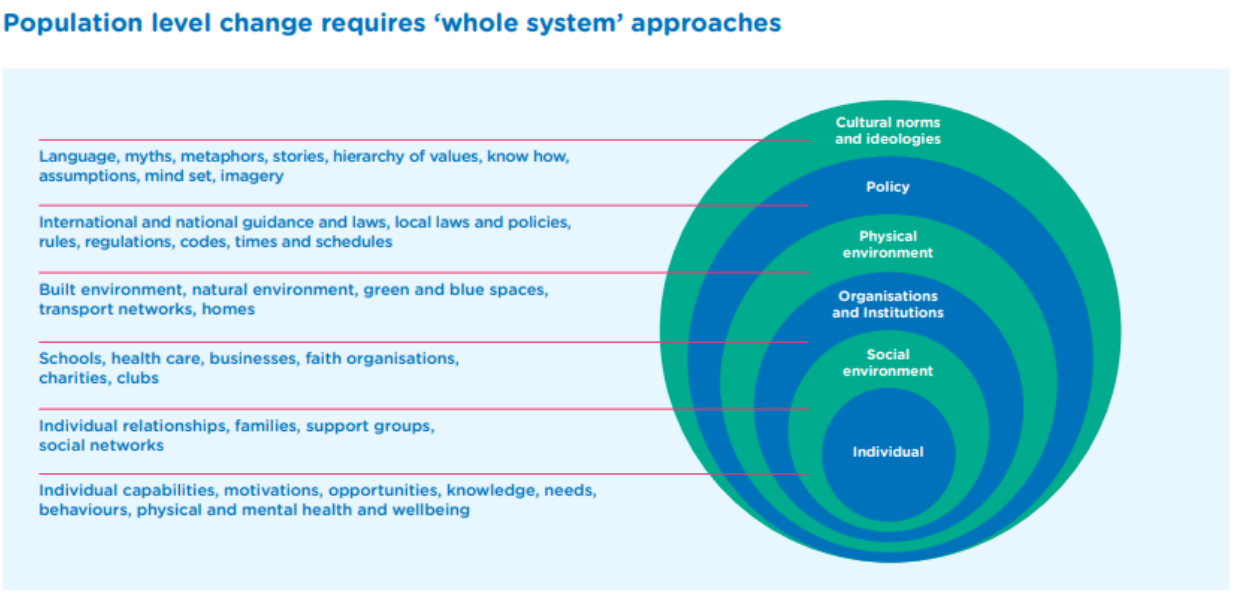
Figure 11: Sport and Physical Activity Governance Architecture - GM Executive Group (Lever, 2017, p.5: presentation)



During 2018, Sport England awarded GM £10m in National Lottery funding, to be part of a pilot study to build more active communities. The national scheme invested £100m which was originally intended to run for four years with the aim to create innovative partnerships that make it easier for communities to access sport and physical activity (GMCA, 2018). This project gave GMM and the GMCA an opportunity to become a test bed for Sports England as a way to develop innovative new strategies and ways of working described as 'test and learn' (Sport England, 2022a). This opportunity gave Sport England a unique opportunity to work with several regions under the auspices of one larger City Region and a new whole system approach, working across sectors. The leadership therefore also came under one single entity/partnership agreement rather than through multiple partnerships across the region using a systemic and collaborative approach (Sport England, 2022b). The whole system approach is described as a commitment 'to work together as one GM team to lead, model,

advocate for and embed a whole-system approach to physical activity, creating the conditions within a healthy, green, socially just City Region where everyone can move and live a good life' (GMM, 2021, p.41). The whole system approach can be seen in Figure 12, which demonstrates the complexity and number of people or organisations across the GM population who would need to be involved to make this approach successful. This approach from GMM is evidence-led 'paying attention to names and numbers; statistics and stories; hard (tangible) and soft (less tangible) indicators of change' (GMM, 2021, p.55).

Figure 12: GMM Whole System Approach (GMM, 2021, p.60)



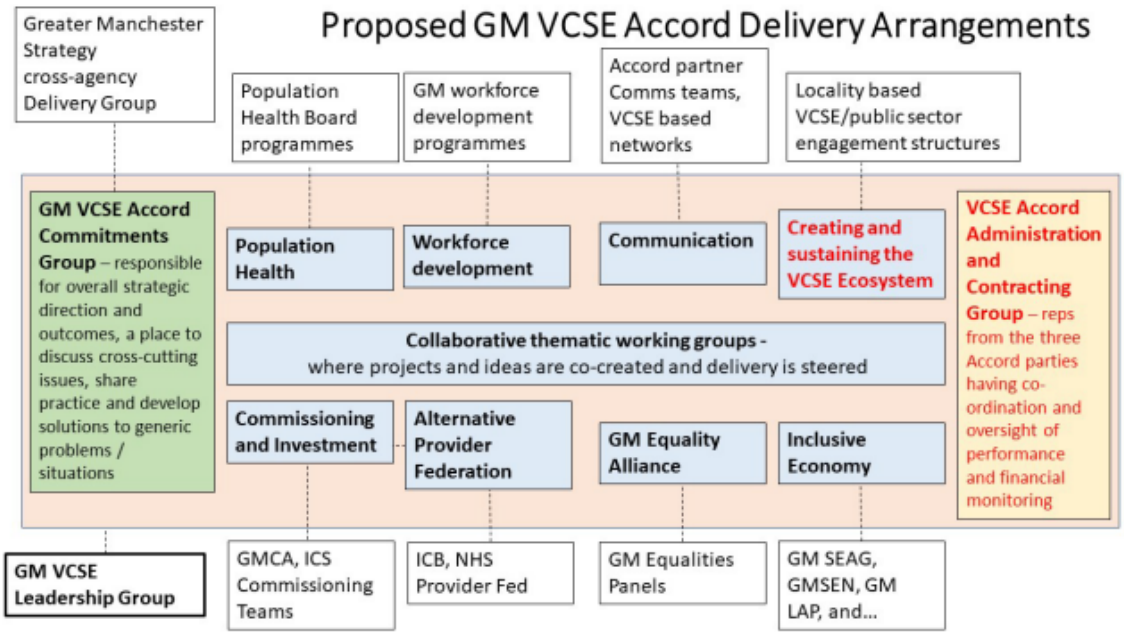
4.2.4 The role of the VCSE Sector in Manchester

In order to respond to the challenges and opportunities of devolution and the cost-of-living crisis, VCSEs (also known as civil society or the third sector) will need to continue to contribute significantly to GM's social, political and economic life (Pilkington *et al*., 2021). Beel *et al*. (2017, p.568) explain this further 'The parallel contexts of devolution and austerity have created a number of challenges, which in turn raise a series of questions about how governance structures will deal with this and how resources will be effectively deployed to create economic development in GM'. The GMCVO (2021) identified that in 2019/2020 there were 17,494 VCSE organisations in GM. These organisations have an estimated income of £1.2billion, with the four largest areas of activity being 'community development (50%);

physical activity and sport (39%); wellbeing, health and social care (28%); and economic wellbeing (21%)' (GMCVO, 2021; Inoue *et al.,* 2023, p.8). Deas, Haughton and Ward (2021) discuss the importance of City Regional or local actors to ensure that relevant and locally developed policies are developed. According to Deas, Haughton and Ward (2021, p.182) the 'centre is too remote to develop policies that adequately reflect local resources and priorities, and that strengthened City Regional institutions are needed to provide the political capacity and technical know-how to coordinate policy across multiple institutions and compete to procure resources from central government'. Beel *et al.* (2018, p.3) found that 'despite the difficult environment surrounding devolution, VCSE groups, although cautious, are also interested to see what it may offer and how they can play an important role'.

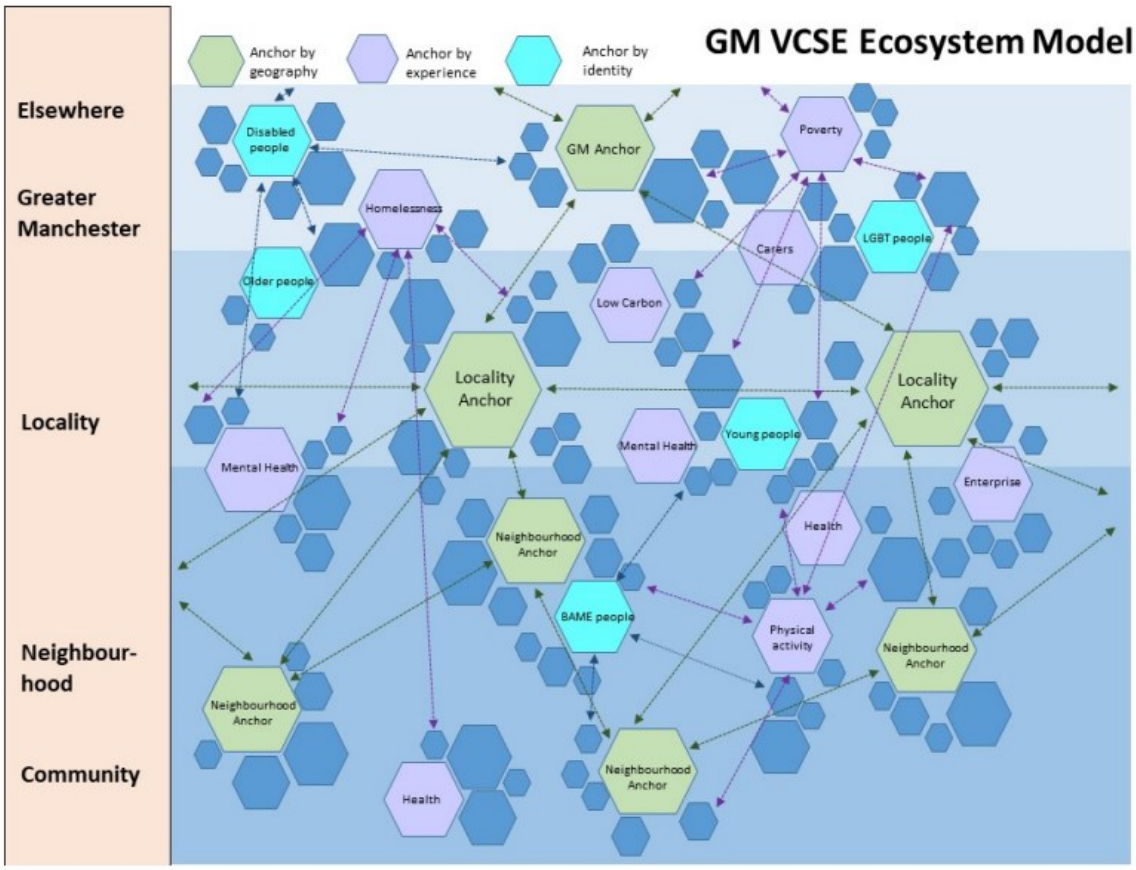
Within the VCSE sector there is a highly complex network of organisations and groups that is difficult to classify into one model. There are several policy actors across GM who are VCSE infrastructure organisations and support volunteering or civil activity (City Region Accord Report, 2020) (see Figure 13). The Greater Manchester VCSE (City Region) Leadership Group was set up as a coalition to promote the VCSE sector and communities in GM devolution (Manchester Community Central, 2023). A City Region Accord group was developed as a three-way collaboration between City Region Leadership Group, Transport for GM and the GM Health and Social Care Partnership. The purpose of the accord was to develop and improve outcomes for GM communities and citizens. The Accord set out to develop a framework for delivery and developed the following model. Although not directly related to the organisation of sport in Manchester, there is sufficient crossover now between sport, physical activity, and health (Beacom, Ziakas and Trendafilova et al, 2023, Inoue *et al*., 2023).

Figure 13: Proposed GMVCSE Accord Delivery Arrangements (GMCA, 2021)



The City Region Leadership group also produced a policy position paper describing the VCSE sector as an 'ecosystem' (City Region Accord Report, 2020) (See Figure 14). This is distinct from Osborne, Nasi and Powell (2021) PSE concept which uses a framework to understand public service at institutional and individual levels. This ecosystem has scaffolding by anchors who will have a leadership role and could be a geographic, experience or identity anchors. Thompson, Southern and Heap (2022, p.687) define anchor organisations as those who provide 'overarching civic functions helping define the City Region'.

Figure 14: GMVCSE Ecosystem Model (City Region Accord Report, 2020, p.7)



There are several anchor organisations in the Greater Manchester Area. GMM are a strong example of these 'anchor' organisations, working within a whole-system approach where partnerships across various sectors contribute to 'consistent, incremental and positive change' to progress towards getting all of GM moving and having active lives (GM Moving, 2023). 10GM is another example, operating strategically and collaboratively to promote local voluntary and community action and social enterprise to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of Greater Manchester's people and communities (10GM, 2023). As mentioned earlier there are approximately 17,494 VCSEs so it is difficult to reliably map/classify. While this ecosystem mapping shows the complexity and level of collaboration it is difficult to understand where a VSC or sports-related organisation might sit, however a number of these organisations might still be contributing to GMM's agenda to increase physical health and wellbeing. It therefore demonstrates the risk of collaborative delivery, where there are too many actors, leading to the wider challenges of complexity, confusion and potential barriers to participation summed up in the fragmented governance lens.

The complexity of the sport landscape in GM is evident, involving a diverse range of stakeholders, organisations and initiatives. This complexity may be because of the region's sporting heritage and the wide range of professional clubs alongside the grassroots and VCSE groups tasked with widening participation in sport and physical activity. This complexity therefore requires a collaborative approach. The collaborative governance framework can offer a lens to understand and manage the relationships between organisations and sectors and to address the needs of communities across the region.

4.3. Sports Volunteering in Manchester

There were two new approaches to sports volunteering in Manchester introduced in the early 2000s. There was the introduction of an online volunteer management system to manage the volunteer recruitment and retention process, and there was the 2002 Commonwealth Games, which saw the creation of Manchester Event Volunteers (MEV) to establish a legacy following the Commonwealth Games of 2002. Rogerson, Reid and Nicholson (2021, p.641) uphold the MEV as a 'key benchmark and exemplar model by which to increase the chances that legacy aspirations associated with mega-sporting event volunteering can be achieved'. The MEV was able to demonstrate that one-off event volunteers could be converted into more regular volunteers across a range of events and opportunities. This core group of volunteers are well known throughout the region for having longevity in their volunteering, having volunteered continuously since 2002 at a range of events. Nichols and Ralston (2012) conducted a review of the MEV and found that there needed to be leadership of a strong legacy framework to ensure this conversion of one-off volunteers to more sustained volunteers. This MEV has now developed into a system which brokers volunteering opportunities whether within event or club/other settings, and has had different names over the period, and within the different boroughs. This was lacking in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the wealth of volunteer resource was lost to the London City Region (Nichols and Ralston, 2014), speaking to the strength of the GM governance at a City Region level. Manchester created the Manchester Volunteering Inspire Programme (Manchester VIP, previously Manchester Volunteering Bureau) as a way to collate all volunteering opportunities within the region and match volunteers with volunteering opportunities (Manchester VIP, 2023). This portal was developed to manage volunteer

coaches and was soon used by the other boroughs and organisations linked to sport, physical activity and health.

There has been a disparate number of organisations promoting and hosting volunteering opportunities, ranging from Sports Development Teams to volunteer centres. A Community of Practice (COP) was developed with VCSE organisations from across GM to promote collaborative working. This COP resulted from the research from Inoue *et al.* (2023) which recommended greater facilitation of relationship building between interested volunteering organisations and partners. The most recent piece undertaken is 'The VCSE Workforce Development Project' to develop one hub for all VCSE workforce in GM to use for recruitment and retention through open data sources attempting to join up all volunteer recruitment sites in GM (10GM, 2024).

There has also been a collaborative project between national volunteering partners such as DCMS, NCVO and Association of Volunteer Managers to develop a 'vision for volunteering' by 2032, which amongst the key themes and objectives, is collaboration as a way to tackle inequality (Vision for Volunteering, 2023). GM have aligned their volunteering approach to the Vision for Volunteering, Sport England's Uniting the Movement Strategy and the GM Moving in Action strategy. This ensures that volunteering across GM has a collaborative approach and encourages a wide diversity of people to volunteer (GMM, 2023).

4.4 Chapter Conclusions

The governance structures within the GM City Region have demonstrated examples of strong collaborative governance even before devolution. Harding (2020, p.19) summarised that the GM approach to governance at all levels and throughout the variety of sectors was one which is long standing and pragmatic where 'coalitions of the willing come together in pursuit of collective aims'. The governance structures link sports organisations with public health, public transportation and focus on community engagement. The landscape of sports volunteering is complex and varied, with organisations across all sectors working within the space to provide volunteering opportunities. Drawing on the organising frameworks set out in the previous Governance chapter and the City Regional devolved contexts examined here, the thesis now moves on to set out the philosophical lenses, methodologies and research design to examine sports volunteering in these landscapes.

Chapter Five Research Methodology

5.0 Introduction

This research provided an in-depth study of collaborative governance approaches in sports volunteering, moving beyond traditional management models towards multi-stakeholder arrangements that operate with the GM City Region. In the wealth of research on sport volunteering few scholars have addressed collaborative governance and regionalism implementation and the impact this has on volunteer management. As Shilbury, Ferkins and Smythe (2013) stated, sports governance has traditionally used frameworks from other sectors. (See Chapters Two and Three). Therefore, this chapter will explore the research methodology used in the thesis. Methodology is defined by Crotty (1998, p.3) as 'the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.' The following structure will be used in this chapter: philosophical positioning, research design and an evaluation of the methodology. The primary philosophical positioning of *interpretivist* will be fully explained, but reasons for the choice of also adopting a *relativist, social constructivist* ontological and epistemological position will be explored. The philosophical positioning is an important starting point as the position adopted will influence how the data was collected and analysed (Flick, 2018). The section on research design will include the methods used for data collection and analysis. The final section will include an evaluation of the research design and the reliability and validity of the data and process.

Sports volunteering, governance and regional research all have a strong background of being based in social sciences (Lockstone-Binney *et al*., 2010; Bekkers *et al*., 2016). Howell (2013, p.21) posits that 'social science is by its nature theoretically informed. Consequently, theory discovery development or meta-theorising should be encouraged as it is a necessary component for rigorous social science research'.

5.1 Research Purpose and Aims

5.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore, explain and understand the collaborative governance of sports volunteering in Greater Manchester and how these have developed and changed in response to public policy, governance, and regional policy. This requires a deep understanding of the sector and the influence of public policy (Jenkins, 1978; Houlihan, 1991,

1997b; Howlett and Cashore, 2020) and governance (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Hood, 1995; Rhodes, 1996; Brandsen *et al.*, 2013). Collaborative governance as a conceptual tool has been used to make sense of the varied ways in which multiple stakeholders, including public and voluntary organisations, and community members, engage in shared decision-making processes and collective action to deliver services for communities (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh (2012). Modernisation has become a significant element of governmental policy within a number of sectors including the voluntary sport sector (Tacon and Walters, 2016). Technological change is also becoming a crucial resource in enhancing the significance of the digital post-waged [volunteer] work (David, 2017; Srnicek, 2017; van Dyk, 2018).

As a recap, the key research questions therefore are -

Research Questions

1. How do collaborative governance principles such as 'starting conditions' influence the volunteer management practices of sports organisations within the Greater Manchester (GM) City Region?
2. How have regional collaborative governance developments influenced the institutional design of volunteer management in the GM City Region?
3. How do volunteer stakeholders interpret facilitative leadership and adapt to complexity and change in volunteer management and delivery in the GM City Region?
4. How have volunteer stakeholders interpreted collaborative governance processes, outcomes and challenges in terms of delivery, such as managing, recruiting, rewarding and retaining volunteers?

Research Objectives

1. To examine how collaborative governance starting conditions influence volunteer management practices within sports organisations across the GM City Region.
2. To analyse the impact of regional collaborative governance developments on the institutional design and frameworks for volunteer management within the GM City Region's sports sector.
3. To investigate how volunteer stakeholders interpret facilitative leadership styles and adapt their approaches when facing complexity and change in volunteer management and delivery within the GM context.
4. To evaluate stakeholder interpretations of collaborative governance processes, outcomes, and challenges specifically related to volunteer delivery mechanisms (recruitment, management, retention, and reward systems) within the GM City Region.

5.1.2 Qualitative Research

Due to the ontological position taken, the research took an interpretive qualitative design. Qualitative research is gaining ground and becoming an increasingly accepted method of research within the field of business and management and the sub-discipline of sports management (Myers, 2013; Veal and Darcy, 2014; Grix, 2015). Myers (2013) believes that qualitative research can make an impact on and contribute to knowledge in business and management in the same way that quantitative research can. One definition of qualitative research offered by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.3) is that qualitative research 'is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible…at this level; qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world'. Bell (2004, p.7) states that qualitative research is to 'understand 'individuals' perception of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis.' Denscombe (2003, p.267) defines this further by discussing what sets qualitative research apart from other research methods. Qualitative data is defined by more than how we interpret meanings and patterns of behaviour; it is 'the approach to the collection and analysis of data… [that] marks it out as quite different from its quantitative counterpart.' Qualitative research also allows for a deeper understanding of the subject to be achieved by 'engaging...with things that matter, in ways that matter' (Mason, 2002, p.1). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) consider that qualitative researchers can study participants or organisations in their natural settings thus, qualitative research allows for the understanding of concepts such as emotions, feelings, experiences, attitudes, etc. that are not quantifiable.

Qualitative research is wide-ranging and according to Snape and Spencer (2003) there is no consensus over the one correct accepted way to conduct qualitative research. Qualitative research and the way researchers conduct qualitative research can depend on many factors such as individual ontological and epistemological beliefs, the research aims, funding, and the researcher themselves and the participants (*ibid*). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) agree that it is not possible to categorise qualitative research under an overarching paradigm, as it is too open-ended and there are many forms of qualitative research. The approaches or methods of qualitative research range from action research, case study research or ethnography to grounded theory (Myers, 2013). Kelly (1980) and Veal and Darcy (2014) discussed the merits of qualitative research, one of the most important being that the method of qualitative

research is relative to the subject studied. Therefore, participation in sport through either playing, coaching, or volunteering is a qualitative experience for the individual. Within sport, there is face-to-face interaction between people, which involves symbols and gestures, therefore qualitative research is well suited to investigating this. Theories are built from concepts and the relationships between concepts. Qualitative research is about justifying and analysing the relationships between the concepts in order to build different levels of theory (Eisendhart, 1989; Myers, 2013).

5.1.3 Philosophical Positioning

It is important to recognise the philosophical position to understand and question the assumptions we make about our beliefs and ideas, and our view of social reality (Proctor, 1998; Smith, 1998; Blaikie, 2009; Grix 2019). This understanding of our beliefs and world view then influences the choice of paradigm. Crotty (1998, p.35) defines paradigms as 'an overarching conceptual construct, a particular way in which scientists make sense of the world or some segment of the world. For scientists in general, the prevailing paradigm is the matrix that shapes the reality to be studied and legitimates the methodology and methods whereby it can be studied'. This choice of paradigm will inform the ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

According to Snape and Spencer (2003) there are three main ontological perspectives; realism, idealism and materialism, whereas Grix (2002) identifies two main ontological perspectives; objectivism and constructivism of which other approaches stem. Rycroft-Malone *et al*. (2012, p.2) go on to explain that 'social reality is mainly an interpretative reality of social actors; and social actors evaluate their social reality'. This study is based on the realist ontological perspective which personifies the researcher's perspective, whereby social actors interpret the realities of the world. Crotty (1998, p.17) confirms this perspective as a belief that, 'social action is not mere behaviour but, instead, involves a process of meaning giving. It is the meanings and interpretations created and maintained by social actors that constitute social reality for them. Social reality consists of the shared interpretations that social actors produce and reproduce as they go about their everyday lives'. Blaikie (2009) explains this idealist view of reality as one where we seek to find patterns and relationships throughout the different perspectives gathered in the data. Mojtahed *et al*. (2014) explained that constructivism was founded on human experiences and shaped through our interactions with

objects and others and that it is important to set common ground between the researcher and the participants.

Intertwined within the ontological position, is the epistemological approach that researchers take, in other words how we know and learn about social reality. The two main perspectives that are frequently used are interpretivism and positivism. There are however several derivatives of this terminology such as the constructivism/constructionism debate. Interpretivist scholars believe that realities can be multiple and relative (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Carson *et al.* (2001) go on to discuss how therefore knowledge is socially constructed. Constructivism focuses on an individual's learning that takes place because of their interactions in a group, whereas constructionism focuses on the artifacts that are created through the social interactions of a group. Howell (2013, p.90) explains the differences between constructivism and constructionism -

> *'Social constructivism and social constructionism incorporate different perspectives of how reality is developed and understood. The former consider that individuals develop and give meaning to the world while the latter argue that meaning is developed through social amelioration and agreement. They come from different directions but each amounts to a similar position in that reality is not external to human existence but determined and defined through social interaction.'*

Howell (2013, p.29) also summarises the different paradigms of enquiry with constructivist and participatory realities, where constructivist is locally constructed based on the experiences on many participants, and participatory is a co-creation between the mind and the world. Head (2018, p.13) found that constructivist approaches are aligned with understanding challenging or wicked problems found within policy research due to the diversity of thought from stakeholders and practitioners.

Myers (2013) discussed how constructivist or interpretivist narratives are usually portrayed as subjective, partial views of reality. There is also an added *relativist* dimension to the research (Blaikie, 2009) through the understanding that social actors interpret reality. Given the complexity of actors engaged in sports volunteering in the GM context and the underpinning drivers of collaborative governance set out in chapters three and four it is crucial to examine the perspectives of this range of actors. The research also needs to take account of the researcher and the researched. Therefore, this research will take an *interpretivist* ontological and epistemological position. This will allow for a deeper

understanding of the different interpretations, perspectives and meanings of the social phenomenon emerging from the data.

5.1.4 Interpretivism

An interpretivist approach (Myers, 2013) allows for in-depth analysis of the management processes used by organisations when working with volunteers. It was important when choosing the approach for the research to consider the design fully, including the philosophical assumptions. It has become clear that an interpretive approach was appropriate due to the decision to interview staff and volunteers within selected sporting organisations. The main strength of interpretivism is that it allows researchers to 'gain an insider's perspective' (Gratton and Jones, 2004, p.19) and therefore the behaviours of the participants can be described and understood fully. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991, p.5) support that interpretive studies 'assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them'. Bevir and Rhodes (2010) developed an interpretive approach to political science where they recommend that researchers 'reconstruct the way that actors see and experience the world to grasp the contingent, but ultimately understandable, grounds for acting upon it' (Wagenaar, 2012, p.87). Thus, as an interpretative researcher in sports volunteering, it would be important to understand and interpret the meanings that the individual volunteers assign to different types and lived experiences of volunteering. (Bevir and Rhodes, 2010, p.78) also believed that actors develop understanding of the world through tradition. They defined tradition as 'the ideational background against which individuals come to adopt an initial web of beliefs'. Therefore, the depth of understanding built through Chapters Two and Four can support the understanding of the traditions of volunteering and place those traditions within GM. An understanding of the social process of volunteering is required to look at decisions volunteers make about their volunteering experience, as interpretive philosophy is concerned with human behaviour and actions (Ivanoff and Hultberg, 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2007). Myers (2013, p.39) states that interpretative research assumes that reality is socially constructed and therefore the use of 'language, consciousness, shared meanings and instruments' are important in the analysis of data'. Charmaz (2006) discusses that interpretive research is easier to understand and complete than other philosophies, as the subjectivity required for analysis is comparable to the construction of the interpretations. Qualitative research allows

for the understanding of concepts such as emotions, feelings, experiences, attitudes, and thoughts etc. that are not quantifiable, and therefore is more relevant with the interpretivist approach (Gratton and Jones, 2004).

5.1.5 Interpretive Schemes

An interpretive schema can be defined as 'a set of shared assumptions, values, and frames of reference that give meaning to everyday activities and guide how organization members think and act' (Rerup and Feldman 2011, p.578). Poole, Gioia and Gray (1989) investigated how processes used by senior management produces changes in organisational schemes and how these can influence change within organisations. Balogun and Johnson (2005) in their research on planned change implementation found that interpretive schemes can be a method of sense-making and can be useful as templates to match against and understand organisational experiences. Hinings and Greenwood (1987, p.2) suggested through their work on organisational design that structures and organisational processes are 'underpinned by provinces of meaning and interpretive schemes which bind them together in an institutionally derived normative order.' Shand *et al.* (2023, p.8) used an interpretive scheme in their PSE research to understand and inform practices 'particularly in response to different contexts and dynamic circumstances'. Bartunek's (1984, p.1) work on interpretive schemes explored ways 'interpretive schemes undergo fundamental change and ways these changes are linked to restructuring' and that 'major changes in interpretive schemes occur through dialectical processes in which old and new ways of understanding interact, resulting in a synthesis.' Sports volunteering in the regional setting of Greater Manchester is a type of interpretive scheme as way to understand change in volunteer management practices. Interpretive schemes have importance to show an understanding of the values, beliefs, assumptions and norms of the organisational design of sports volunteering used by the actors involved, in order to make sense of their place within sports volunteering in GM, understand cogent external pressures and how any schemes are used to inform policy or practice. (Child, 1977; Hoye *et al*., 2020; Shand *et al.*, 2023).

5.2 Research Design

As part of the research design process, methods were selected that would answer the aim, objectives, and key research questions of the research. It was also important that the research would contribute to knowledge within the sport and volunteering arena. The following will

include rationale for the literature review process, case study, methods of analysis and development of findings and theoretical contributions.

5.2.1 Case Study Design

As can be seen in the more detailed analysis of volunteering in Chapter Two, there are a vast number of organisations within sports volunteering within the UK, and for this reason the fieldwork was constrained into the City Region of Greater Manchester. Greater Manchester combined authority is made up of 10 metropolitan boroughs, including two cities. As can be seen in Chapter Four, there are variations in terms of the populations in the region, which have different socio-economic, economic, and demographic differences (Orsolic, 2016; Beel, Jones and Jones 2018). Organisations within this geographical area use a variety of different methods to manage their volunteers and yet were integrated into this thesis for examination of their contextual differences, similarities, and challenges.

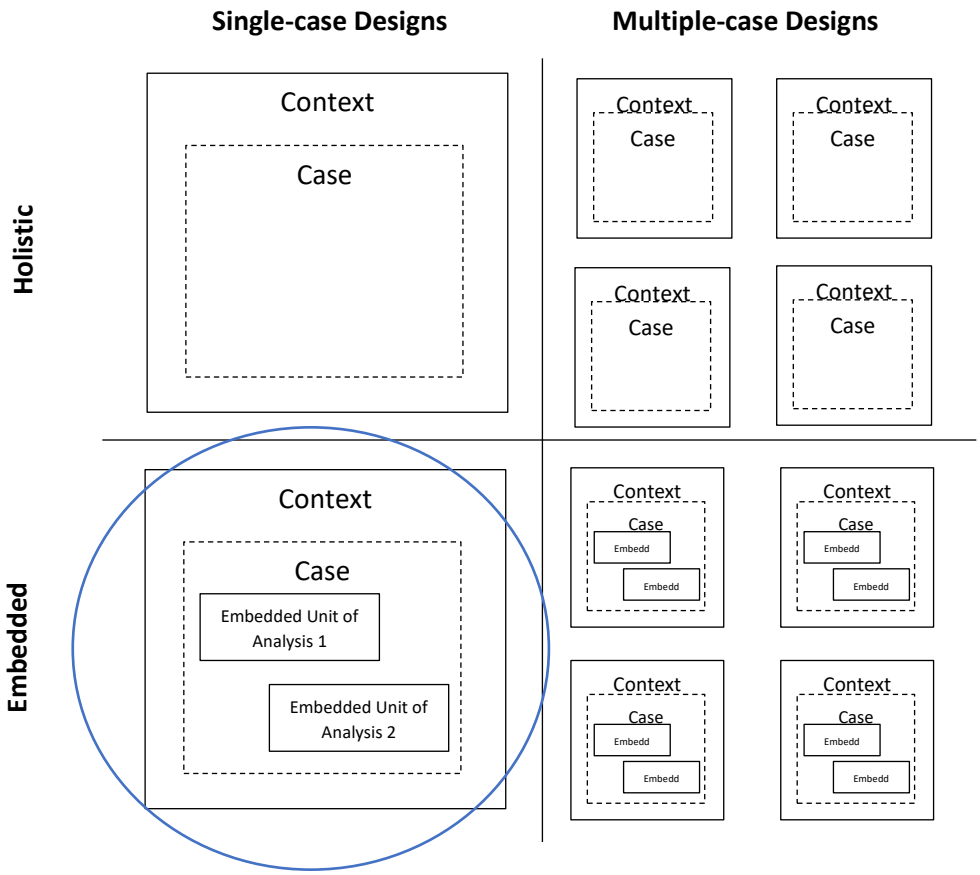
This complexity of data therefore lent itself to a single-embedded case study method. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) debated interpretivist versus positivist approaches when using the case study method. Yin (1989) has a positivist stance but Walsham (1995) states that the interpretive school of thought would accept Yin's view. Walsham (1995) believes that an in-depth case study can be an 'interpretive' investigation especially as the research may involve visits to the organisation over a substantial period. In this case an interpretative exploration of organisational and managerial volunteering processes took place. Stake (1995) cited in Cresswell (2003) discusses that the merits of a case study are the depth that can be explored by the researcher through a deep dive of the subject matter, and that although the case study has boundaries of time and activity, the researcher can collect such detail using a variety of data collection methods. Myers (2013) writes that research case studies are used as an empirical document to persuade other academics of a new theory or proposition. Lewis in Ritchie and Lewis (Eds.) (2003) also echoes that case studies can be used in a variety of ways but that they are strongly associated with qualitative research.

Lewis in Ritchie and Lewis (2003) explained that the main features of a case study are the differing perspectives which can be entrenched in one specific context or multiple contexts and can also be collected using multiple methods of data collection or a single method to gather different ideals on the same subject. Case studies can employ an embedded design, that is, multiple levels of analysis within a single study (Yin, 1984) in Eisenhardt (1989). Yin

(2007) developed and summarised this view further in Figure 13 demonstrating that there could be single or multiple case designs following a holistic or embedded design.

As volunteering within sport organisations at different levels from policymakers to end users will be examined in detail, a single embedded case study method of qualitative research is therefore an appropriate approach (Yin, 2014) (See Figure 15)

Figure 15: Embedded and Holistic Case Study Research (Yin, 2007)



Using Yin's (2007) holistic or embedded model for this research problem two models could be used: either the single-case holistic design or the single-case embedded design. However, to get the depth and information required a single-case embedded method would be required as the research needs to take place using different organisational contexts. Therefore, a deep dive into a single embedded case study of regional and national significance was undertaken. This level of data will generate comparative inferences and lesson drawing for further regional cases in the future. Lijphart (1971, p.382) defines comparative methods as ways of

'discovering empirical relationships among variables, not as a method of measurement'. A number of sport scholars (Dowling, Leopkey and Smith, 2018; Dowling and Harris, 2021) recognise that comparative methods have some challenges and limitations and adopting a comparativist approach is to identify any limitations alongside the findings.

The number of phases and sequencing of activity was planned to ensure the project remained on target and that a logical sequence of events related to the case study design took place (See Table 9).

Table 9: Activity undertaken in case study approach.

Phase	Activity
Phase 1	Background study of literature
Phase 2	Mapping of landscape of sports volunteering in Greater Manchester
Phase 3	Semi Structured Interviews
Phase 4	Analysis of interview documentation
Phase 5	Secondary documentary analysis
Phase 6	Analysis of all data
Phase 7	Case study formation

5.3 Data Collection strategy

5.3.1 Theoretical Sampling

The participants for the interviews were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is used when the main purpose of the critical case study is to generate explanatory frameworks (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling ensures that every contact has the potential to aid the researcher through their in-depth discussions illuminating the field of research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) discuss how a purposive sample could be selected to add to the depth of understanding. The reason that purposive sampling was selected in this instance was that specific people working and volunteering in sports volunteering within Greater Manchester would have an important range of views which were needed in the sample (Campbell *et al*., 2020). Yin (2014) however, warns about

purposive sampling and generalisability, whereas Blaikie (2009) recommends clarifying the chosen sampling concepts for accuracy, precision, and bias. A mapping exercise was completed in early 2020 before the pandemic (see Appendix 1) to try and identify the vast array of volunteer networks/partners within GM (Houlihan, 1991), however the landscape shifted so quickly this was soon outdated. This was based on Blaikie's (2009) recommendations whereby a variety of contexts is used to identify organisations who could represent a unit of analysis. One reason for selecting the geographical area of Greater Manchester was to focus the research for access purposes. During the period of the Doctoral Training Programme and during the time working in the Greater Manchester area as an academic, personal contacts have been developed in these areas. The population parameters were defined as organisations associated with volunteering in sport within Greater Manchester. These organisations could come from any sector provided they provided or worked with volunteers in community, professional or sport events. Individuals were selected as representatives of the organisations they worked or volunteered for due to their experience. The nodes/unit of analysis were selected on whether the individual was a volunteer, volunteer lead or strategic lead. The sample therefore is only representative of the data collected and not able to be generalised to a wider population.

Several organisations and contacts provided access to volunteers that were based in the Greater Manchester area. These contacts were able to facilitate further contacts to include in the study. Respondents were selected on the basis that there was slice across different organisations operating in the sector, but all were based in Greater Manchester in order to satisfy the research questions (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Or as Adams (2014, p.559) comments 'in other words, purposive sampling was strategically employed in an attempt to build up a strong association between the research questions and the sample itself'. Saturation determined the size of the sample. The data collection was therefore concluded when enough interviews were completed, and the information was becoming repetitive from the emerging thematic analysis (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007).

5.3.2 Coding and Embedded Units of Analysis

The participants were coded in the following ways…

- *Type 1 – Volunteers* **(V)** - those who had volunteered in any voluntary capacity (i.e., Events, any sporting activity from community to elite sport). All the volunteers had sustained volunteering with either one or multiple organisations.
- *Type 2 – Volunteer Leads* **(VL)** – those who had responsibility for the management/coordination of volunteers (recruitment, retention, reward) but not necessarily in a paid role.
- *Type 3 – Strategic Lead (***SL)** – Directors, Senior Managers, Owners – those with a strategic overview of volunteering.

Based on these three types of participants were selected at each level of analysis, Zeimers et al (2021: p. 190) commented that 'delving into multi-level research could pave the way for a better understanding of how they intersect'.

- *Strategic Level* - Directors, Managers/Owners
- *Macro Level* – Volunteer Leads
- *Micro Level* – Volunteers

30 interviews took place (See Table 10), two people were interviewed from both their volunteering and their leadership perspective, as their experience prior to their leadership role was wide enough to justify including their experience (V5/SL7 and V2/VL1).

As discussed earlier in this chapter this research employed an embedded case study design (Yin, 2018) with sports volunteering in Greater Manchester as the overall case context. Within this broader case, multiple embedded units of analysis were selected to capture diverse perspectives. The interviewees which make up the embedded units of analysis compromised of people from across GM, a range of organisations linked to sport and across a range of sports. The embedded units included i) three Strategic Leads from community clubs both voluntary and social enterprises and two from councils ii) three owners and consultants with roles in volunteer management and volunteer management systems iii) three Strategic Leads from Regional organisations iii) two Volunteer Leads from the Education sector iv) two leads from community clubs v) two leads from councils vi) two leads from NGB Events vii) thirteen individual volunteers with varying roles and lengths of service (See Table 10 for more detail). This intentional sampling of multiple organisational types and individual roles has meant that within unit and cross-unit analysis has allowed for comparison between different elements of collaborative governance.

Table 10: Range of Interview Participants (Embedded Units of Analysis) and Codes

Organisation/ Type of Activity	Type of Participant	Code
Multi-sports (Clubs/Events)	Volunteer	V1
Sailing (Club and NGB)	Volunteer	V2
Multi-sports (Clubs/Charities/Events/Social Enterprises)	Volunteer	V3
Football (Club and NGB)	Volunteer	V4
Multi-sports (Clubs, NGB's and Events)	Volunteer	V5
Football and Athletics (Club/Events)	Volunteer	V6
Cheer (Events/Club)	Volunteer	V7
Multi-sports (Club/Professional Club/Events)	Volunteer	V8
Netball (Club/NGB/Events)	Volunteer	V9
Multi-sports (Clubs/Events)	Volunteer	V10
Multi-sports (Clubs/Events)	Volunteer	V11
Multi-sports (Clubs/Events)	Volunteer	V12
Multi-sports (Clubs/Events)	Volunteer	V13
Organisation Type/Role		
Club (Training Lead)	Volunteer Lead	VL1
NGB Event (Volunteer Lead)	Volunteer Lead	VL2
University (Volunteer Manager)	Volunteer Lead	VL3
Club (Volunteer Lead)	Volunteer Lead	VL4
Council (Volunteer Lead)	Volunteer Lead	VL5
Disability Sports (Volunteer Lead)	Volunteer Lead	VL6
Not for Profit Organisation (Volunteer Lead)	Volunteer Lead	VL7
NGB Event (Volunteer Lead)	Volunteer Lead	VL8
Organisation Type/Role		
Club - Sports Enterprise (Owner)	Strategic Lead	SL1
Volunteer Management (Founder)	Strategic Lead	SL2
Charity/Government (Consultant)	Strategic Lead	SL3
Private Training/Coaching Company (Owner)/Ex Council	Strategic Lead	SL4
VCSE Joint Venture (Strategic Lead)	Strategic Lead	SL5
Club -Voluntary (Club Lead)	Strategic Lead	SL6
CSP (Volunteer Lead)	Strategic Lead	SL7
Council (Strategic Director)	Strategic Lead	SL8

5.4 Data Collection Methods

5.4.1 Gathering rich data.

Multiple data sources were collected to develop a deeper and richer understanding of the issues and to support the development of argument, theory and to support triangulations (see Table 10 for more information). Yin (1989) in Walsham (1995) listed that evidence for case studies could come from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts. Yin's six sources of evidence therefore helped with the decision making of what to include (2014, p.105). The data included primary data from the semi-structured interviews and secondary data from official documents such as strategies and policies/websites/social media. A comprehensive desk review of secondary data was conducted initially to underpin the background for the organisations involved prior to the interviews, but retrospective secondary data was also reviewed as the interviews were on-going to ensure that information was kept current throughout the data collection period. The secondary sources included academic sources, policy documentation, material produced by the relevant organisations and any news or media reports (Shipway, Jago and Deery, 2020).

The case study approach using multi-methodology allows for the examination of several perspectives in order to build a detailed understanding of the motivations and transference that occurs with community and professional club volunteering, and event volunteering and how these have evolved over time, (Lewis 2003 cited in Ritchie and Lewis (2003)). Brewer and Hunter (1989) cited in Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) established the term multi-method research, first involving the use of more than one method of data collection. Multi-methodology is able to gain insights from two or more different perspectives. The case study method however has been used within several sports volunteering research studies. Parent, MacDonald and Goulet (2014) researched into the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games and built a case study using multi-methodology to research archive material including web pages, technical reports, newspaper articles and semi-structured interviews. As mentioned earlier, as this thesis was based on organisations in GM, the case studies will make no claims of generalisability across other localities in the UK, 'but seeks rather to unpick the nuances associated with a particular phenomenon' such as volunteering and policy (Grix, 2009, p.36)

As the volunteering at both community sports clubs and events will be examined in detail, a case study method of qualitative research would be a useful approach (Yin, 2014). Qualitative interviews with key decision makers at national bodies and key members of management staff and volunteers will be undertaken, who are able to provide richer, more detailed accounts of their experiences (Veal and Darcy, 2014).

5.5 Interviews

Interviews can take several forms, from very structured to unstructured. Legg and Karner (2021) confirmed that semi-structured interviews are relevant and useful for research using an interpretist framework. Structured interviews usually have a list of pre-planned questions with no deviations usually within a time limit (Myers, 2013). Each question is repeated to all interviewees ensuring that answers are comparable (Bryman, 2016). There are several benefits of structured interviews as the results are seen to be more accurate and can allow for easier analysis (Grix, 2010). At the other end of the scale unstructured interviews allows the interviewer to be more flexible, with just a list of themes to cover and able to follow interviewee responses more informally. A broad semi-structured approach to the interviews was taken (Birks and Mills, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were used as they can provide richer, more detailed accounts of participant's experiences (Veal and Darcy, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable instrument, this allows for some degree of consistency and yet allows for 'new lines of enquiry to be explored' (Myers 2013, p.112). May (2011) also confirms that semi-structured interviews allow for greater discussion, prompting and elaboration of answers in areas which would provide benefit to the research area. Interpretivism as a premise is concerned with developing a stronger understanding of human experiences (Mojtahed *et al*., 2014) therefore the choice to use semi-structured interviews enabled the freedom to engage the respondents in suitable dialogue to explore and encourage interviewees to expand on relevant information (Beacom, Ziakas and Trendafilova *et al.,* 2023).

Using technology as part of research is not an entirely new phenomenon, the internet and ethnography were introduced as 'netnograpahy' by Kozinets (2010). This type of research was concerned more with using social media content/e-mails etc. Using technology to conduct interviews was always under question. Face to Face was always seen as gold standard (McCoyd and Kerson, 2006). Thunberg and Arnell (2022) debated this in their recent research

into the use of alternative technologies in qualitative research, finding that although there were some limitations to online interviews there were clear benefits.

Online interviews were used for all interviews, this meant they could be recorded to assist with producing transcriptions. This was done through a subscription to Otter.AI and then listening back to each interview to check and correct the transcript provided. The aim of the interviews was to now find the perspective of volunteers and organisations for how volunteer management has changed over the years, why particular volunteer management systems or procedures are used and how the relationships between the volunteer and organisation have adapted. Institutional guidelines were followed to provide potential interviewees with a participant information sheet and informed consent was gained from each participant.

A comprehensive semi-structured interview guide was developed following a thorough review of the literature to address the research objectives (See appendix 2). Different questions were developed for volunteers and then for the strategic and volunteer leads (See Table 11) These questions were generally used as prompts but allowed for expansion and further probing/focused questions (May, 2011).

Table 11: Interview Question Themes

Interview Question Themes - Volunteers	Research Objective
Background Overview of volunteering experience Roles in volunteering Length of time volunteering? Types of organisations/events? Why/How involved in volunteering?	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
Volunteer Management How recruited? Training Qualifications/certifications Reward Communications Monitoring in role? Feedback	RQ2, RQ3
Impact Positive impacts of volunteering? Any negative impacts?	RQ4
Community Community within org Wider volunteering community Differences between paid/volunteers	RQ1, RQ4
External Pressures Tech use- changes? Funding/policy impacts?	RQ2, RQ4

Covid 19 Impacts	
Interview Question Themes – Volunteer and Strategic Leads	**Research Objective**
Background Job Title/role Why/How involved in volunteering? Type of organisation?	RQ1
Volunteer Management How is the organisation/club organised and run? What types of volunteer roles do you look after? Recruitment of volunteers Volunteer Management Systems – Tech? How are vols managed and supported? Diversity of volunteers? Reward of volunteers/ Incentives	RQ2, RQ3
Impact KPI/Measurement/reporting/tools National/local Policy Impacts of volunteers on your organisations Any issues/negatives to working with volunteers	RQ4
Community Support from network/ NGB/ partners Wider volunteering community	RQ1, RQ4
External Pressures Tech use- changes? Funding/policy impacts? Covid 19 Impacts	RQ2, RQ4

5.5.1 Thematic Analysis (TA)

As set out earlier in the chapter it is vital to capture the range of interpretations and perspectives from respondents. In order to operationalise the philosophical aspects of the research design, a thematic analysis will be undertaken. It is important to consider how the analysis will be organised; there will be a large amount of data as multiple perspectives and organisations will be examined (Yin, 2007) (See Figure 13). Stake (1995) cited in Cresswell (2003) discusses that the merits of a case study are the depth that can be explored by the researcher, and that although the case study has boundaries of time and activity, the researcher can collect such detail using a variety of data collection methods. Miles and Huberman's (1984; p.28) research confirmed that while there needed to be a systematic approach to qualitative research, being too focused on procedure could lead to 'inane analyses'. Therefore, they support the Guba's (1981) premise that an element of tracking of the analysis process should take place, yet researchers maintain an element of creativity.

The analysis procedure used the following process based on TA (Braun and Clarke, 2006), coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ryan and Bernard, 2000) and Interpretive Schemes ref (Bartunek, 1984; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Shand *et al.*, 2023) to explore the themes suggested by the data in order to develop a theoretical framework (Myers, 2013) based on individual perspectives of sports volunteering in GM. Braun and Clarke define TA as 'a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). Braun and Clarke's (2013) method of analysis has six very clear stages to follow:

1. ***Reading and familiarisation*** – All finalised transcripts were printed out for reading and familiarisation, and useful, relevant, interesting quotes were highlighted.
2. **Generating initial codes** - Fully manual coding and analysis was used to generate codes. This meant a much deeper level of manual coding and analysis took place. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.56) define coding as 'tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the…information compiled during a study'.
3. **Searching for themes** – There were several repetitive issues that kept emerging and so initial codes of *governance*, *volunteer pathways*, *volunteer management, collaboration, communication, belonging, technology* and *Covid*-19 were identified as initial themes. This process was all completed by hand, using hard copies of the interviews and any documents, pens, and highlighters. Following this finding the themes by examining codes and seeing what fitted together began, and a table was created to keep track of the themes and codes (See appendix **). The codes and themes kept being refined until the themes were coherent and distinct (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017) (See Table 11). Several methods were used to search for themes but the manual method using colour coded quotes to look for patterns and creating an excel spreadsheet to help with the coding was preferred. (See Appendix 3 for initial themes)
4. **Reviewing themes** – The themes have been through several iterations where they were modified and developed. An Excel spreadsheet was created with all highlighted codes which were colour coded.
5. **Defining and naming themes –** The selection of the final higher order themes was developed, and these were confirmed as i) The Volunteer Experience: Identity, Power Dynamics and Motivational Factors, ii) Facilitation of Opportunities, iii) Contextual

Landscapes: Policy, Regional and External Influences iv) Relational Foundations: Building Collaboration.

6. **Finalising the analysis/Write up** – The quotes from each theme were then translated onto a mapping spreadsheet for analysis against the Ansell and Gash (2008) model.

It is important to acknowledge that the analysis procedure included secondary data, the understanding of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and disciplinary knowledge, and therefore meaning was constructed through existing theory and concepts relating to sports volunteering and collaborative governance. This method was used by Shilbury, O'Boyle and Ferkins' (2020, p.281) research into collaborative governance who confirm they were 'able to derive insights that may not have been possible through a more descriptive (experiential) orientation to the analysis of participant experiences. Beacom, Ziakas and Trendafilova (2023) also confirm that the lived experience of the participants and their individual experiences and perspectives needed to be taken into account but ties in well with a constructivist approach. Silverman (2001) highlights the importance of case studies to highlight emerging themes and issues.

5.5.2 Document Analysis

The possible range of secondary data for the documents analysis includes: 'documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artifacts' (Yin, 2009, p.103). Documentary evidence from organisational documents will also provide secondary data and form part of an institutional analysis. The organisational documents such as organisational strategy, policy, presentations, and meeting minutes for example can all provide valuable insight and background about the organisations (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Creswell (2009) has also identified the usefulness of organisational documents in that they can be accessed at a convenient time and will be in the language and words of the organisation. Andrews (2014, p.559) posits that policy type documents are useful to 'corroborate and augment evidence' therefore the use of official organisational documents will be used to support the primary data collection. The data collected from the organisations involved will be able to add context to the study (See table 12) for list of organisation codes and documentation). The data can also be cross-examined in order alongside organisational, regional or national policies to support or provide context to the research (Grix, 2010; Myers,

2013). In Chapter 5 and 6 interview quotes alongside quotes from documentary evidence are used to support the findings and discussion (Yin, 2014).

Table 12- Secondary Documents Organisations

National Governing Bodies	
NGB1	Website
NGB2	Website
NGB3	Website, pdf poster
NGB4	Website, documentation for recruiting, retaining and rewarding volunteers
NGB5	Website
NGB6	Website, documentation for recruiting, retaining and rewarding volunteers
NGB7	Website, , Volunteer Strategy document, documentation for recruiting, retaining and rewarding volunteers
NGB8	Website
GM Strategic Sports Organisations	
GMSO1	Website, research documentation, blogs, COP minutes
GMSO2	Website
BGMSO3	Website
CVS	
CVS1	Website
Councils	
C1	Website
C2	Website
Event Organisations (Mega Events in the region)	
EO1	Website, news articles
EO2	Website, news articles
VCSE Clubs	
VCSEClub1	Website

VCSEClub2	Website, Facebook page
VCSEClub3	Website
VCSEClub4	Website (No mention of volunteering)
Professional Clubs	
PC1	Website, role descriptors documents
PC2	Website, role descriptor documents
VMS	
VMS1	Website
VM2	Website
Education Institutions	
EI1	Website, Volunteer Policy Document
EI2	Website
EI3	Website

5.6 Selection of Theoretical Framework

In selecting a theoretical framework by which to analyse the collaborative dynamics of sports volunteering within the GM City Region, the Ansell and Gash (2008) model emerged, and it is well suited for several reasons. Firstly, the model has an analytical, comprehensive approach to collaborative governance which include process and contextual factors. Unlike Emerson, Nabatchi and Balogh's (2012) narrower model which focuses on institutional analysis, Ansell and Gash's (2008) model includes multiple dimensions including starting conditions, institutional design, leadership and process dynamics. This multi-faceted approach aligns with sports volunteering which is a complex mix of institutions.

The Ansell and Gash model draws attention to historical contexts and power imbalances as part of the starting conditions which help to understand the unequal relationships between volunteers, community sport, professional sport, sports events and the public sector.

The cyclical nature of the model corresponds well with the relational processes in play and the cyclical patterns inherent in sports governance. Sports volunteering operates within funding cycles where resources, priorities and partnerships are regularly reviewed and

renegotiated in line with mega events or funding rounds (Davies, 2016; Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2021). The model's focus on facilitative leadership provides a framework for analysing the engagement mechanisms required to facilitate participation in sports volunteering.

Ansell and Gash's (2008) model demonstrated that it can be applied, and the conditions tested across diverse contexts including environmental management, public health and community development (Strokosch and Osborne, 2020; McNaught, 2024) . This versatility means that it can be applied in a sports volunteering context (Shilbury, O' Boyle and Ferkins, 2016, 2020). Whilst other collaborative frameworks could offer valuable perspectives, Ansell and Gash's model is the most comprehensive and appropriate lens for interpreting the dynamics of collaborative governance in sports volunteering revealed in this research.

While the Ansell and Gash (2008) model also discusses outcomes, these are not included in the research questions and objectives, as the thesis is not focused on the efficacy of policy goals, neither does the research seek to evaluate national government approaches to this policy arena. Rather the thesis focuses on sports volunteers experiences and interpretations working in collaborative governance arrangements in GM City Region.

5.7 Ethical Considerations

It is important when conducting research that ethical credibility of knowledge is ensured. Payne and Payne (2004, p66) define ethical practice as 'respect and protection for the people actively consenting to be studied'. Lincoln and Guba (1985) found that trustworthiness is important to evaluate findings and be illustrated through 'credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability'. This is supported by McNabb (2002, p.37) who states that there are four principles of ethics that fit well with research in public administration 'truthfulness, thoroughness, objectivity and relevance'. All research projects undertaken at the University are required to secure ethical approval before they take place. The research in this thesis was in line with the University ethics and governance requirements. All guidelines were followed, and a first iteration was submitted and approved as a paper application during the early stages of the PhD. The University then moved to an on-line system called EthOS and it was required to submit to this system for reapproval in February 2020. All submissions are checked by the Faculty Chair of Ethics and then peer-reviewed by an expert academic in the field (See appendix xx).

5.7.1 Data Management

At each phase of the research all the data and documents were uploaded and saved into password protected folders on the University computer system which uses two factor authentication. On-line interviews were conducted which were recorded and saved. Scripts were initially typed up manually, then using Otter.ai. Each transcript was then checked for accuracy and consistency in order to ensure the quotations to be used were correct.

Each interview was transcribed (using one of the methods described above) alongside the interview' rather than conducting all interviews and then transcribing so that initial analysis and coding could take place after each interview. Participant Information Sheets and Consent forms were used with each interviewee.(See appendix 4). Research participants were given the option to check their interview transcript for respondent validation (Yin, 2007). Individual privacy was maintained, and organisations and individuals are anonymised (Urquhart, 2013). All names of interviewees have been removed and all quotes are attributed to a code instead of a name in order to remove the chance of information leading back to specific individuals (Miles and Huberman, 2004). As this is a case study of sports volunteering in Greater Manchester it will be difficult to ensure full anonymity.

5.7.2 Reliability and Validity

Reliability for qualitative research is mainly focused on procedural reliability especially around interviews. This is why semi-structured rather than unstructured were chosen as the method and clear coding methods were used (Flick, 2018). Analysis followed an explanation building approach (Yin, 2003) and therefore the qualitative content analysis to deconstruct and interpret verbal and written text was completed in a systematic and relatively objective manner. Validity can be measure across four criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. The research has gathered three perspectives from volunteers, volunteer leads and strategic leads. Multiple secondary data sources and academic literature have also been used to support the analysis and findings ensuring that there has been data triangulation, The thesis has also been supported by a team of supervisors who have sense checked results for researcher triangulation. (Yin, 2018; Quintão and Almeida, 2020)

5.7.3 Limits to Objectivity

Qualitative research is criticised for not having the same scientific rigour as quantitative research, but social scientists disagree with this view (Lincoln, 1995; Henry, 2015). There is however a need to account for any personal biases especially whilst developing a subject that had personal and academic interests. Stake (2006, p.87) comments that 'it is an ethical responsibility for us as case researchers to identify affiliations and ideological commitments that might influence our interpretations'. As there is a personal awareness through previous volunteering experiences, work in Greater Manchester and other research conducted in this field and that there is involvement and knowledge of sports volunteering in Greater Manchester, assumptions may be injected into this thesis (Crotty, 1998). This familiarity, however, did allow for more effective interviewing of the participants and a greater understanding of sports volunteering that a researcher completely removed from sports volunteering or GM would not have had (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2020). However, Patton (2001) discussed this and stated that an approach of objectivity mindfulness and an awareness of values that could be clouding judgement is required. Guba and Lincoln (1981, p.378) also comment on this position stating that it is an 'unusual problem of ethics and the responsibility as a case study writer to remain objective when constructing the case study and be mindful of minimising bias'. Blaikie (2009) recommended that a full appraisal of the practical and theoretical strengths and weakness would lead to a better critical appraisal of the work.

5.8 Chapter Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the research phenomenon and to justify the methodological choices. Interpretivist epistemology was used to underpin and justify the chosen qualitative research methods. The research strategy and design therefore reflected the research aim, questions, and objectives. An embedded-single case study was selected as this was the best method to have a deep dive into sports volunteering within the Greater Manchester City Region and to understand the complexity and in-depth rich data. The principal data collection method was semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders within the sports volunteering network. Documentary analysis in the form of white papers, web pages, blogs, news articles and organisational policy documentation were also integrated into the findings and analysis Finally, the methodology was evaluated in detail to establish that

there had been thorough ethical consideration of data management, reliability and validity and the limits to objectivity.

The findings were presented in two-chapter (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) using responses from the interviews to illuminate the themes of i) The Volunteer Experience; Identity, power Dynamics and Motivational Factors, ii) Facilitation of opportunities, iii) Contextual Landscapes: Policy, Regional and External Influences and iv) Relational Foundations: Building Collaboration. Chapter 8 was the analysis and discussion chapter where the findings and themes were then analysed using the lens of the Ansell and Gash (2008) Collaborative governance Model. The responses and the accompanying analysis and discussion have been strengthened by using relevant policies and organisational information.

Chapter Six Case Study Findings – The Volunteer Experience and Facilitation of Opportunities

6.0 Introduction to Findings Chapters

The purpose of the following two chapters (Chapter Six and Chapter Seven) is to present the findings of the interview analysis and to examine the secondary documentation from sports organisations in Greater Manchester. The thesis aimed to explore volunteer management within sports organisations in the Greater Manchester (GM) region using the theoretical lens of collaborative governance guided by the following research questions:

1. How do collaborative governance principles such as 'starting conditions' influence the volunteer management practices of sports organisations within the Greater Manchester (GM) City Region?
2. How have regional collaborative governance developments influenced the institutional design of volunteer management in the GM City Region?
3. How do volunteer stakeholders interpret facilitative leadership and adapt to complexity and change in volunteer management and delivery in the GM City Region?
4. How have volunteer stakeholders interpreted collaborative governance processes, outcomes and challenges in terms of delivery, such as managing, recruiting, rewarding and retaining volunteers?

To address these questions, a series of interviews were held with stakeholders from across the GM region, including volunteers, volunteer leads and strategic leads. The richness of the data collected required a structured approach to presenting the findings. To facilitate clarity and depth of analysis, the findings have been organized into two distinct but interconnected chapters, allowing for a more focused examination of the themes.

Whilst Ansell and Gash's (2008) collaborative governance model provides the theoretical framework for this thesis, the findings below are presented using the four higher order interconnected themes that emerged - *Volunteer Experience*, *Facilitation of Opportunities* (Chapter Six), *Contextual Landscapes* and *Relational Foundations* (Chapter Seven). The themes are then structured by interview level (volunteer, volunteer lead, strategic lead and secondary documentation) which allows the empirical data to speak for itself through direct quotes and examples from the interviews. The themes identified intersect with elements of collaborative governance theory including starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership and collaborative processes, however Chapters Six and Seven will focus on presenting the rich empirical evidence before the theoretical interpretation. The theoretical

analysis and discussion of how these findings relate to and extend Ansell and Gash's model will be addressed comprehensively in Chapter Eight.

The first findings chapter, Chapter Six, explores the first two themes, *The Volunteer Experience* and *Facilitation of opportunities*. *The Volunteer Experience* theme captures the volunteer identity, power dynamics and motivational factors. The second theme of *Facilitation of Opportunities* will examine the practical structures, strategies, and systems that these sports organisations employ to recruit, retain, and support volunteers.

6.1 Theme 1 – The Volunteer Experience: Identity, Power Dynamics and Motivational Factors

This theme examines how volunteers are valued, and positioned within organisational power structures, revealing tensions between formal terminology and lived experiences. The findings demonstrate the complexity of individual motivations and systemic incentives that drive volunteer participation.

6.1.1 Volunteers

6.1.1.1 Volunteer Identity

Volunteers are aware of how important they are to ensuring community sport and sport events are able to run:

> *'If I didn't volunteer and if other people didn't volunteer, things wouldn't happen' (V3)*

The interviews showed that the terminology of volunteering is not easily defined for some volunteers. One volunteer summed this up as:

> *'You have these positive experiences…you appreciate the need to volunteer from…early on, but not necessarily realising you are volunteering...it's that whole* ***what is volunteering****?' (V12)*

Volunteers pointed out that they do not always view the activities they do to support the club or event as 'volunteering'. Some view their roles as just *'helping out'* or in some cases that any tasks allocated/roles given out were as part of their membership to the club.

> *'I've* **helped out** *with …campaigns at sports clubs'(V3)*

6.1.1.2 Power Dynamics

There are clear power Imbalances between volunteers and paid staff. There were strong views from volunteers about this tension and how there needs to be a recognition that volunteers are different to paid staff. The findings highlighted the tensions that exist between paid staff, termed '*the professional workforce'* and the '*volunteer workforce'*. Some volunteers commented on the tension when the paid staff are perceived to be doing the same role as volunteers.

> *'When you are volunteering and there is somebody who is being paid and you do get treated on that hierarchy and I think… fair enough, they have been here a long time…but I bring value to the team.' (V1)*
>
> *'This person is the one in charge and we are the ones just here to help. But it really depends on whether they've got enough people who are paid staff. (V6)*
>
> *'A lot of people are doing the same as me, but actually getting paid' (V8)*

One volunteer commented on the very visible way paid staff were treated compared to the volunteer staff.

> *'There was an event where the volunteers were given cold foods options. So, sandwiches, crisps, drinks, and then the paid staff were given hot meals. The rooms were next door to each other. So, the volunteers could hear and smell the food being dished out to the workforce, the paid staff. The volunteers were getting cold sandwiches, and that's where you can see the difference in treatment between the two' (V13)*

One volunteer acknowledged their own dissatisfaction when people view volunteers as lesser than the paid staff.

> *'People almost look down on our role because you are a volunteer, so they won't acknowledge that you've worked somewhere or been part of a team because you were volunteering, instead of thinking this person gave up their free time to come and do this because they're passionate about it' (V1)*
>
> *'They expect such a level of dedication…of a paid job (V1)*
>
> *'When you have to remind them that well actually, I've taken the day off work to be here to help with this.' (V1)*

However, there was some acceptance of the power structures between volunteers and paid staff.

> *'I'm the volunteer, they are paid. They've got the authority because they are paid to have that authority.' (V5)*
>
> *'I never felt just because this person is paid... I never felt disadvantaged or looked down upon.'(V6)*
>
> *'You know, because the differences that when you're a paid staff member, you do sort of expect them to be a bit more informed than the general volunteer. And that's not disrespectful. It's just that they're part of an organisation' (V13)*

Th power imbalance appears to be mitigated in some cases by mentors therefore creating a more empathetic relationship, with one interviewee having a mentor who was a former volunteer.

> *'[the mentor] has been in my shoes'* (V10)

Another volunteer mentioned that they were *'fortunate'* to gain access through meeting the Event Manager, showing a relatively positive power dynamic.

> 'I just…stayed in contact, with her…took her phone number and email...she was telling us about what she does. And how…she's looking for volunteers herself.' (V8)

6.1.1.3 Personal Networking

Networking was a theme that appeared across all levels, but the volunteers discussed networking more at the personal skill development level, so it has been included in this section of the chapter. The networking discussions with volunteer and strategic leads and found amongst the secondary documentation analysis found networking operated on a more organisational space and part of the wider GM networks and so this has been placed in theme four – *Relational Factors*

Volunteers spoke of the contacts, links and networks they made through volunteering and the impact that had on their development:

> *'It just helped me with my career so much there's people I've met through volunteering and…linking two from the work that I do that I just never saw coming' (V5)*

'...networking with people that I wouldn't have come in contact with before' (V8)

One volunteer also spoke about ow the university networks encouraged volunteering:

'Trying to really go off what they were telling us at uni… if you haven't got those experiences… your likelihood of ending where you need to might be less.' (V9)

Volunteers also discussed the social and networking benefits of volunteering:

'You're always going to come across somebody you volunteered with already.' (V1)

'Meeting new people is an [incentive].' (V1)

'The club is a particularly social club'. (V2)

6.1.1.4 Motivational Factors

One of the more traditional pathways into volunteering is through previous playing experience in that sport, and then progressing into volunteer coaching/refereeing or committee roles. The volunteers felt it was the natural progression to move into other roles within the sport demonstrating long affiliations to their club and sport, so consequently volunteering or pathways into coaching was a natural progression as a way to give back and help others.

'I've been involved in volunteering and sport since I was 14. I've always played sport and then always volunteered. I have had various roles with the [NGB], youth councils and youth leadership roles - local and national...but also volunteering at tournaments' (V4)

'I was part of the swimming club and the natural progression within that club was to take over these roles to support the club, so my history of volunteering was born out of personal experience in swimming' (V11)

Parental influence also played a part in why some of the participants volunteered often having volunteering in-built into their upbringing.

'I've been volunteering all my life' (V3)

'I just kind of used to turn up to my club and just do it because my dad did it...and then turned up to university and then kind of realised there's more of a system.' (V5)

'It was very much embedded in my upbringing that [volunteering] was going to be something that I was keen on doing' (V11)

Other volunteers began volunteering based on informal networks (a family friend's recommendation), or through a personal connection with the club showing that social capital played a role in entry.:

'I was…speaking to a family friend who volunteered at the [National Event]... so I actually signed up for the [International Event].' (V13)

'I'm a big fan [of the club]' (V10)

Some of the volunteers who were interviewed also commented on how their involvement was for altruistic reasons such as their commitment to the sport, their love and enjoyment of their spot and wanting to give back to their sport.

'I've had so much out of this sport... you feel an obligation in some ways to try and give something back' (V2).

'As time has gone on, I think I've been inclined to want to give something back and I think volunteering is a phenomenal way of giving something back' (V3)

'The first one [volunteering role] was simply because I love football, and I love people and then from there I just kind of signed up and did everything simply because I love it.'' (V5)

'I've got no interest in the rewards. I just want to volunteer because I just want to volunteer' (V7)

'It just gives you a little boost and experience but also, it makes you realise…what interests you as well. And not only are you doing it for yourself, but you're putting back in for the wider picture' (V9)

'a sense of…you've done something really good' (V10)

'I just kept signing up to opportunities. And the more I did it, the more I found, I really enjoyed it'. (V13)

There was evidence that positive experiences created ongoing engagement.

'It was volunteering that convinced me volunteering wasn't a negative experience.' (V5)

'[The Event] was something that we did almost every year and we knew as a group of friends that volunteered.' (V6)

Other volunteers commented on how their involvement with volunteering had started through education and employability related requirements, which provided the initial connection:

> *'When I came to Uni, there became a different aspect of volunteering I didn't think of before and that was more career development.' (V6)*
>
> *'...began from one of more units that I did in first year. And the events one was where we have to put on an event, or my group happened to do it through a basketball event.' (V8)*

A lot of the volunteers commented on the importance of experience and personal, professional and skill development

> *'My skill set has definitely grown.' 'It's helped me get to the jobs I'm in now because of the experience I've had.' 'Meeting new people.' (V1)*
>
> *'Lots of project management skills, timekeeping, organisation.' 'Really gave me this confidence more than anything else.' (V7)*
>
> *'It's definitely helped me get my job without a doubt…It made me feel more confident. (V5)*
>
> *'Having that experience in both of those organisations…I feel it has really helped me.' (V8)*
>
> *'Probably more on the experience side' (V10)*
>
> "You're not really doing it for the greater social good... you are doing it for yourself.' (V11)

One of the volunteers who was using volunteering to gain experience for future career choices described how they enjoyed event work for the variety offered and used this is a motivator to continue volunteering to experience different role types.

> *'It might have been a one-off event…because that's probably something you don't get to experience normally. So, I took opportunities…looking at different roles' (V9)*

Volunteers did not have many barriers to motivation apart from cost to the volunteers especially in terms of time:

> *'I do miss some time with the family...I miss things like getting to watch football, but I can only go there when we're not doing something that I'm volunteering for.' (V3)*

'The time commitment was a lot...I was [volunteering] like four days a week, I was in uni three to four days a week.' (V7)

6.1.2 Volunteer Leads

6.1.2.1 Identity

Volunteer roles are essential for facilitating sporting activities, as was highlighted in most Volunteer Lead interviews.

'Volunteers are critical, absolutely critical' (VL1)

'Sport and events wouldn't happen without volunteers' (VL4)

'Essentially, sport and the events wouldn't happen without volunteers. So, it needs that authoritative backing and support…to be completed.' (VL4)

'Events won't go ahead without volunteers. It'd be a nightmare.' (VL6)

The terminology of volunteering was also discussed along similar lines to the volunteers

'Some clubs just don't see it as volunteering… 'they're committee members, just doing their part.' (VL5)

6.1.2.2 Power Dynamics

One of the volunteer leads commented that committee roles are usually done by the same people thereby maintaining power, but it would be a good opportunity to widen those opportunities out.

'Like a lot of clubs [who have a] Constitution, they have to have an AGM every year. And in theory, they should all be electing the committee. Often it stands the same, if people want to stay, but some people might want to have that opportunity.' (VL5)

There was limited mention of the differences between paid staff and volunteers, but one Volunteer Lead discussed bringing both volunteer and paid roles together:

'We are Team Workforce. I'd say two work on volunteer side, and then we're on the…paid workforce…So that's why I refer to them as workforce because they are members of that sort of unanimous bracket of workforce, whereas I know they are volunteers… the [volunteers] never get called workforce…they don't know that terminology. It's just an internal terminology'. (VL7)

6.1.2.3 Motivational Factors

The importance of recruiting the family of participants to volunteer came through

> *'It's always easy when they come along if they've got family and children…we do expect parents…to help, so we try and involve parents from the word go…we get them along, we get them to volunteer for things, we cajole them into being assistant instructors'. (VL1)*

> *'We badge it to them (the parents/volunteers) as saying the instructors are there to teach...getting the [equipment] out and putting them away is not a good use of their time' (VL1)*

> *'There could be a parent in a club, who picks up the whistle and just has a go… but they haven't even realised what they're doing. But at the end of the day, they are a volunteer.' (VL5)*

Some organisations had clear incentives structure:

> *'You ended up getting a sport volunteering t-shirt...LinkedIn endorsement...free training course… (VL8)*

6.1.3 Strategic Leads

6.1.3.1 Volunteer Identity

The Strategic Leads were clear about the value that volunteers bring to the organisation:

> *'They bring… a set of unique characteristics that means… they can…see your service in a different way and they can relate to the world in a different ways' (SL3)*

> *'Volunteers are the backbone of an effective sport and leisure strategy… probably the single most important part of the plan.'* (SL8)

There were also comments on the need for clarity about the paid and volunteer roles

> *'Volunteers...not quite being a staff member...occupying a slightly weird space...they can become very critical ambassadors for you.' (SL3)*

> *'It's always been fine for a volunteer to want different things...as long as we're all kind of clear about that.' (SL3)*

> '*People just generally see it as mucking in and helping the club out.'* (SL6)

> *'I think where we've got…to be really clear about what's the role of a paid employee, what's the role of a volunteer, and what we've always tried to do, is not replace staff with*

> *volunteers…it's a tricky one… this is about adding value. Our statutory responsibilities should be met through employees, who you can guarantee are going to be there come rain or shine. (SL8)*

It was evident in some of the responses from the strategic leads, that there is now a recognition that there also needs to be a more flexible offer, rather than more formal structures of volunteering where it is expected that someone will volunteer weekly, that they can sign up to help with a particular task.

> *'The need to have more flexible volunteering and volunteering that meets the requirements of the volunteer. Rather than the volunteer meeting the requirements of the volunteer opportunity. So microvolunteering, armchair activism…task-based volunteering where you are not necessarily signing up to an organisation per se, but you are signing up to help [with a specific task]' (SL2)*

> *'That's been part of this trend that we're seeing, not that we've moved entirely away from traditional volunteering form of volunteering through organisations with clearly defined roles that the volunteer, but now we are moving through to something…more flexible' (SL3)*

The strategic lead for a VMS commented about the changes to volunteering they had seen since being a volunteer themselves:

> *'The direction of travel in volunteering has moved away from what I grew up with...it's a more commodified version of volunteering, the voluntold model, we've seen more of that, it's built in. You've got to go and do it because it's part of your CV, so the more transactional type of volunteering has gone up.' (SL2)*

6.1.3.2 Power Dynamics

Confusion of terminology continues into those holding leadership roles. The volunteer and strategic leads use the terminology of '*workforce'* even when referring to volunteers.

> *'There is counterproductive policies going on, you know, in terms of messaging to the voluntary sector of whether you should be professionalised, or you shouldn't be professionalised' (SL4)*

> *'The only way we could manage the **workforce** requirements that we had was to have a gang of volunteers working alongside a gang of professional coaches' (SL8)*

There were references to inequalities between organizations in the sector—especially between larger bodies like Sport England and smaller grassroots or informal mutual aid groups:

> *'...you've got local authorities, leisure providers, and the market, has got more and more fragmented over that period. Then the NGBs [National Governing Bodies], and you've got the representatives of the sport, then the people that have got the facilities...' (SL2)*

> *'There is a potential of having big hitters or the usual bodies somehow getting the lion's share of that landscape... the idea that I go to them [mutual aid groups] with a label or a badge is just ludicrous.' [In reference to volunteer passports] (SL5)*

> *'They speak different languages. They perceive work in different ways. But realistically, they're doing the same thing... they're both exactly the same. They just speak different languages.' (*SL6)

Fragmented volunteer systems in volunteer access highlight unequal starting points:

> *'This system was basically a postcode lottery... down to whether or not someone happens to find…an opportunity that was in their radius.'* (SL6)

6.1.3.3 Motivational Factors

Volunteering is linked with club membership. Some strategic leads include volunteering tasks within their club membership or ask parents/family members to '**help out'**.

> *'My…understanding of the club structure is you've got a lot of volunteers that are also members of the club, so volunteering is coterminous with participation for them, it's part of their life' (SL3)*

> *'I think if you said to a lot of our members, that a lot of what they do is volunteering, they wouldn't believe it. I don't think they see it in that kind of capacity at all…I don't think people would see it as being…volunteering…I think it's more just that people just generally see it as mucking in and helping the club out' (SL6)*

However, some of the volunteer Leads have found changes in volunteer motivations, with increasing *'transactional'* volunteering:

> *'It's that transactional type of volunteer, whether we want to acknowledge it or not the societally, there's a movement that way with the younger generation'* (SL2)

> *'That's been part of this trend that we're seeing, not that we've moved entirely away from traditional…form of volunteering through organisations with clearly defined roles that the volunteer, but now we are moving through to something a little bit more flexible' (SL3)*

> *Over the last 10 years…there is a bit of a dawning that there is more to volunteering…there's an element of them being customers and there's a transaction to that experience, and that there is probably more that they can bring in the uniqueness of their contribution' (SL3)*

> '*We…have an agreement that we'll pay for your coaching to be done through reciprocal coaching at our place…'* (SL6)

Strategic Leads also commented on the importance of family especially parents to get involved and *help out* while their children were attending sessions:

> *'Sometimes when parents are there particularly watching the young people, they've come up and offered and one way or another, we've got them involved in a whole host of different ways' (SL1)*

> '*We do expect parents to come along, we expect them to help…help the kids…, help them put…away. So, we try and involve parents right from the word go. If you come from a [sport] family, then you know how you can help out. But if you get parents who have no [sport] experience whatsoever, in my experience, they are always keen to help, but they just don't know how to do it – they don't know what to do. So, we get them along, we get them to volunteer for things'* (SL6)

One of the strategic leads with a remit across all the GM boroughs commented on how, despite there being many reasons to volunteer, whatever way volunteers became engaged it invariably led to more volunteering:

> *'I think there's always been such a disparate variety of reasons why people volunteer. So, employability is the classic one, isn't it, you do this because it will look good on your CV will make you stand out… good volunteering leads to good volunteering. And that's good enough…without the job at the end of it without the badge without the t-shirt, without the recommendation. And I …genuinely think there is room for everybody in that in that sphere. It's not an either-or conversation, and it doesn't make one a more or less worthy volunteer, depending on the reason they do it.' (SL5)*

6.1.4 Secondary Documentation

6.1.4.1 Volunteer identity

Echoing the volunteer stakeholders there was a clear recognition of the importance of the volunteer:

> *'Volunteers are the lifeblood of movement, physical activity, and sport in Greater Manchester' (GMSO1, Website).*
>
> *'There are many ways you can volunteer and even a small amount of your time can make a big difference'. (NGB4, website)*
>
> *'Our brilliant volunteers are the backbone of our organisation' (NGB1, website)*
>
> *'[The Club] needs new volunteers to help the game grow' (VCSE Club3, website)*
>
> *'Volunteers are a valued and important core of the work and services we provide' (NGB2, website)*

Some organisations provided a definition of volunteering, one educational institutions used The Compact Code of volunteering's definition:

> *"An activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or*

in addition to) close relatives." (EI1, Volunteering Policy document)

'Put simply, volunteering is helping out, lending a hand or giving time to help others'. (C1, website)

'Any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims primarily to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than close relatives'. (EI3, website)

For some organisations there was real enthusiasm for volunteering

'We're passionate about supporting the voluntary sector' (VMS1, website)

The secondary documentation indicated that efforts to be more inclusive and attract a diverse volunteer workforce:

A more diverse and representative voluntary workforce can support and encourage people from under-represented groups to engage in activity. (GMSO1, Website).

By improving the diversity of volunteers, more people from under-represented groups can benefit both from volunteering, and from having inclusive opportunities to be active. (GMSO1, Website).

'At [the educational institution] we celebrate and welcome diversity among volunteers and those who work with them. We have a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice in volunteering and encourage our volunteers and partner organisations to share this commitment'. (EI1, website)

'Our volunteering programme welcomes people from all backgrounds and areas of the community to volunteer and develop their skills' (GMSO3)

'The sport is too reliant on individuals, many of whom are carrying out multiple roles and becoming overburdened. Many volunteers don't feel supported or valued for what they do and feel training and development opportunities are lacking and difficult to access. Our volunteer network lacks diversity and doesn't reflect the communities we serve. A large proportion of our volunteers and clubs are in areas of

socio-economic disadvantage and would benefit most from more support to tackle the challenges they face. We need to support and empower our people and our communities to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sport.' (NGB7, Volunteering Strategy Document)

6.1.4.2 Power Dynamics

There was also some discussion amongst the secondary documentation about how individuals define themselves.

'Not everyone who gives time supporting others to move more might define themselves as volunteering in sport and physical activity'. (GMSO1, Website).

'We know the value of volunteering. We strongly believe that volunteering means people independently choosing to give their time freely to help others and make the world a better place. It is not simply "unpaid work". We believe in keeping volunteering voluntary' (GMSO2 website)

There was promotion of external events using terminology such as 'help out'

'The objective of The Big Help Out is to raise awareness of volunteering throughout the UK and provide opportunities for people to experience volunteering and make a difference in their communities'. (GMSO1, blog)

The tension in language can be seen from one of the professional clubs who advertise for volunteers to join their *'workforce'*

'[Professional Club] are looking for volunteers to add to the…Community Foundation strong workforce' (PC2, Website)

One council lists their volunteering opportunities under the heading 'job vacancies' on their website:

'Organisations and employers in [council area] have a variety of opportunities within the borough and beyond' (C2, website)

The events held in the region had specific names for their volunteers at the event – this was following the trend of the London 2012 GamesMakers

'The Power Squad is a select team of over a thousand volunteers' (EO1)

'[Sport] are looking for volunteers to join the Dan Clan as the [sport] world arrives in Manchester' (EO2)

6.1.4.3 Motivational Factors

Most of the secondary documentation from organisations confirmed (Sold) the benefits of volunteering:

We know that the benefits of positive and inclusive volunteering opportunities can be life-changing, whether through improved mental wellbeing, personal development or building community networks and trust. In turn, this creates a positive impact on those supported into activity, helping communities to build connections and enabling people to move more. (GMSO1, website)

'We know that students volunteer for a whole range of reasons. Some of these might be: • Connecting to your wider community • Helping a cause you are passionate about • Gaining confidence • Learning new skills • Enhancing employability' (EI1, Volunteering Policy document)

'We believe in the power of the voluntary sector to make the world a richer, kinder place' (VMS1, website)

*'By volunteering you can boost your own wellbeing, whilst connecting with the community, and supporting people from all walks of life as they get afloat. Here are just a few **benefits of volunteering**: Meeting new people and boosting your social skills; Increasing your self-confidence and the confidence of others; Boosting your mental and physical wellbeing; Helping to create an inclusive and welcoming community'. (NGB4, website)*

'Volunteering is a great way to improve your skills, develop your talents and gain the type of experience employers are looking for. It can also be a great way to support your local community, increase your circle of friends and improve your mood and well-being'. (C1, Website)

'There are many reasons to get involved, including: Having fun and experiencing the joy of working with our athletes! Feeling part of your community and making a real difference; building lasting friendships; Developing new skills for personal and professional development; Volunteer education and safeguarding support' (NBG1, website)

'Becoming a Volunteer offers many benefits including: Skill development; Qualifications; Not to mention fantastic fun, valuable experience and exciting new challenges!' (NGB8, website)

'Volunteering with [NGB] is a great way to help us make a visible difference through sport. Not only does it benefit the charity, but it also gives you the chance to give something back, meet new people, gain experience and have fun'. (NGB5, website]

The Education Institutions promoted the skills that volunteering would give their students:

'Volunteering is more than time spent; it's also about skills gained' (EI1, website)

'We know that volunteering is an amazing way for students to have fun and acquire skills, knowledge and experience outside of their academic studies'. (EI1, website)

"Student success…is our students developing their skillsets and gaining experiences within industry environments to complement their studies, supporting them to achieve their career goals." (EI2, website)

Some of the organisations were able to point to reasons why individuals did not become involved in volunteering:

'There are significant barriers to volunteering for some individuals and groups, which have only been exacerbated by factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis'. (GMSO1, website)

Some organisations promoted different types of volunteering as a way to get more engagement:

> *'Look out for "micro-volunteering" opportunities on the Volunteering portal. These roles will require very little of your time, so are perfect if you've got a busy schedule but still want to help in your community'*. (EI1, website)

One club has a web page called *'club duties'* where the expectation for all club members to contribute to the running of the club is set out.

> *'All club sailing members over the age of 16 are expected to contribute to duties each year to assist in the smooth running of the [spot] programme. Social members are also encouraged to take on duties, especially where they have skills to support new or less experienced members. You are encouraged to sign up for your duties via the website-based system when the calendar and duty list is released; this means you can choose the dates of your duties and ensure it doesn't clash with other commitments. Members who do not volunteer for duties via this system by a specified date, will be allocated duties by the committee. The duty system also enables you to request a swap with another member if you need to'. (VCSE Club 1, website)*

VCSE Club 1 only mention the word volunteer in all their documentation when there is mention of what will happen if they do not 'volunteer' for duties.

VCSE Club 1 also has page on their website dedicated to the role parents will need to play in the club, the page does not mention volunteering but is clear on what their involvement will be, the terminology of '*job*' is interesting:

> **DO I HAVE TO GET INVOLVED?**
> YES! You will be expected to help your child [set up the sport]. As with all activity at the Club your involvement is essential. Here is a list of what we will need your help with. ACTION NEEDED - Let us know if you have a job preference

6.2 Theme 2 – Facilitation of Opportunities

This theme addresses the processes and structures that facilitate volunteer engagement in collaborative governance arrangements. The findings explore how recruitment practices,

reward systems, and training programs are interdependent mechanisms that either enhance or constrain participation in volunteering.

6.2.1. Volunteers

6.2.1.1 Recruitment Practices

The recruitment process across the GM region is varied with some more traditional recruitment methods used, including the use of VMS, of which there are different systems in use across the boroughs. This variety was mentioned by the volunteers:

> *'There's so many different volunteer recruiting sites in Manchester (V1)*
>
> *'The first one that I did was with [club]. That one was more word of mouth, and it was an introduction from my lecturer.' (V1)*
>
> *'We have the system within Uni, which allowed…me to search different sports, different events.' (V6)*
>
> 'Actually, it's more of an informal recruitment...' (V8)

There were variations between whether volunteers received clear role descriptors, one volunteer talked about how they had received job descriptions:

> 'A lot of the roles I did apply for…[were] job description based and I…knew what I was getting myself into.' (V6)

However, there were also relatively informal structures with no formal job description:

> 'When I first started, [the mentor], who I work with, explained to me, the kind of things I'd probably be getting involved with.' (V10)

6.2.1.2 Reward Systems

Rewards were discussed a lot by volunteers with a range of material and non-material rewards had been given to volunteers:

> *'I have had T-shirts, little badges, car stickers and always a big thank you, some different initiatives to say thanks. (V1)*
>
> *'It was obviously nice…to get a bit of merchandise and… endorsement and…training courses. It really*

benefited me as well, it was…nice, a little well done, a bit of a pat on the back.' (V7)

Some organisations provided structured rewards dependent on the hours logged:

'The more hours you logged, the more you can…engage with training. If you did 100 hours, you could get a £100 bursary towards a training qualification.' (V5)

'I was able to log my hours so that [the volunteer lead] could see how close I was…to particular targets [and] to be able to earn particular rewards. (V5)

'There's been rewards that have been our base rewards that gave me badges. Within the system, there's…a bronze, silver, gold tally. Essentially, the higher you go up, the more credible your volunteering became within the app…It also shows if you got certificates. And within that once you hit a certain amount of hours you also receive T-Shirts and help towards courses. I think it was like Bronze, you get a T-shirt. Silver was a hoody and then gold was £150 or £200 towards a course or your own choosing.' (V6)

One of the younger volunteers reflected on how the rewards they achieved were based on a social and competitive element through the VMS:

'As a volunteer, I really did enjoy that. Because it was that competitive element, whereas I knew if I was going down to volunteer at a weekend that was adding to that tally, and you reached up to that ultimatum of top prize?' (V13)

'I use it [the VMS]... it was that competitive element... sort of reached up to that ultimatum of top prize.' (V13)

One volunteer discussed how important being nominated for an award at a regional ceremony was and the benefits of opening up more networks:

'When the award happened, I was introduced to…more volunteers…I think that made me feel quite close knit with the community… after the awards there was…messages from other volunteers who were asking for guidance and an organisation asked me to work with them to engage some volunteers.' (V1)

Other volunteers describe how important a *'Thank You'* is for recognition:

'That photo then got put on social media of all of us together, that was a big thank you to our volunteers.' (V1)

'A big thank you goes a huge way as well…people just like to feel appreciated' (V2)

'That 'Thank you'...sometimes it's obvious to close that loop, isn't it?' (V5)

One of the longer serving volunteers discussed how important it was to have Clear pathways for advancement:

'You're now an Assistant Instructor but now wouldn't you rather go and do an instructor course?' (V2)

Rewards had mixed responses with some volunteers discussed how those incentives helped their skill development or motivation:

'If you… volunteer for 100 hours, you can get a £100 bursary through a training course'. (V4)

'Made me want to volunteer and made me want to gain those little badges and gifts.' (V6)

Yet some volunteers want to participate with no interest in rewards:

Yeah, I've got no interest in the rewards. I just want to volunteer because I just want to volunteer.' (V8)

6.2.1.3 Training

Training is viewed as important by the volunteers and there is variety dependent on the type of volunteering, or the commitment required, there was certainly a level of formal training offered for events, even if it was on the event day.

'When you get to the…bigger events there's always a level of volunteering where you have the training, you understand the event, the times, who's coming etc.' (V1)

'When it's a small club like [club name] or like [University Club] it's…pick it up as you go along.' (V1)

'The NGB have a very comprehensive programme' (V2)

'You turn up for an induction day. They're going to give you the crux of the event. They tell you what you need to know, tell you the roles that you might have' (V5)

'We go there on the event day, but we'd go a couple of hours earlier than when the event started. And so, they would then give me a run through, give me a tour of the building and different things like that. But there was no like prior training, it was very much kind of learning on the job' (V8)

There was inconsistency across organisations in terms of training, with NGB's and larger clubs/events having very structured formalized training:

'When I started at [smaller NGB] I had not much training. (V1)

'There was no training or formal induction process/' (V10)

6.2.2 Volunteer Leads

6.2.2.1 Recruitment Practices

The volunteer leads focused on communication with different groups to ensure that they had enough volunteers:

'We ask them [the club members] at the beginning of each week... the parents to volunteer for one of the four roles' (VL1)

'The training and development, the check in's, I'm definitely looking to move more of that online because it means I can increase my capacity and I can get in touch with people easier... it'll be hybrid, a weird half and half'' (VL4)

'Some people would email me saying, 'I want to do the full day session'... (VL6)

Some of the volunteer leads discussed how the use of a VMS platform helped standardize and structure volunteer recruitment and engagement:

'[The VMS] definitely made [things] easier... You could just go on, see all the volunteers... and all the information…' (VL6)

'That's essentially like an online portal where we can see all the information... accreditation details... training... shifts.' (VL7)

One volunteer lead who worked for an organisations which covers a whole borough discussed how they made the system more user-friendly:

'What I decided to develop and put together myself is a kind of easy user step-by-step guide…[to the VMS] click here, click here… if I was a provider, put in an opportunity.'

The volunteer lead for one of the universities acknowledges that:

'there's been fatigue on trying to get things started and then not happening.' (VL3)

6.2.2.2 Reward Systems

The volunteer leads suggested that whilst the VMS was useful for providing transparency when awarding rewards:

'It's the chair's job to log everyone's hours for them as well... making sure that the log is accurate.' (VL8)

However, there were some suggestion that there is an incomplete commitment to the process of logging hour amongst some volunteers and whether this is the correct mechanism for rewarding volunteers:

'Currently our reward system is structured around hours…There's debate as to whether that's a relevant way to reward if you're a volunteer. But currently we structure around hours, so it's based on the hours they log on that system, and then they have access to different rewards based on that' (VL3)

The volunteer lead responsible for a mega event being held in the GM region discussed how the organisation was working to improve volunteer retention and engage event volunteers:

'I'm the lead on reward and recognition... we've done a welcome pack... pin badge... flask... personal video from [a key athlete in the sport]. (VL7)

'We launched a community volunteering scheme with the [NGB]... trying to retain the volunteers.' (VL7)

6.2.2.3 Training

The volunteer leads commented on how induction training was an important element to create common knowledge, set expectations and gain commitment:

'If they've done that [NGB qualification]. they are that committed you have them hooked in' (VL1)

We're doing a basic orientation... what's your day going to look like? What questions might you get from fans? (VL7)

'Most of the events we had, we had a training session... they could just get the tops [merch], understand the area, what they've got to do…' (VL7)

'We have a full induction day where you go to…different sessions.' (VL8)

The volunteer leads also describe pride in the quality of their training programmes and how much training and development is provided:

' A comprehensive [NGB program] that is accepted more or less worldwide as the best way to teach people' (VL1).

'We've always offered to pay the full cost of the course back to the instructors when they have done 6/7 full days (volunteering), that offer has been on the table for way back before I got involved with this...nobody has ever taken it up, not one single solitary person has ever taken us up on that.' (VL1)

'The committees get a lot of training as they have access to the Volunteer Programme, leadership, finance, how to deal with difficult people, how to grow your fan base, first aid, active bystander, disability awareness.' (VL3)

'We're doing basic orientation, specific venue training, mental fitness training, climate literacy, and familiarisation.' (VL6)

'A comprehensive...leadership training, particularly public speaking trainings, and training around difficult conversations.' (VL8)

There were comments from some of the volunteer leads about how sustainability can be built into training as a way to cut costs and as a way to empower volunteers:

> *'The biggest challenge for us is cost...we don't have much money to spend on training, we can't train every single club and committee member, whereas if there is a train the trainer course, we can send two people on that, because that training is basically banked to be delivered hundreds of times. (VL3)*

One volunteer lead commented that whilst the VMS provides structure, they have not received 'full training' (VL3) on the system, suggesting volunteers might encounter inconsistencies between organisations and the importance of training at multiple levels.

6.2.3 Strategic Leads

6.2.3.1 Recruitment Practices

Some strategic leads found recruitment of volunteers challenging:

> *'We did a survey of members…we asked a question about would people be willing to volunteer' (SL1)*
>
> *'The biggest challenge is to keep bringing in new blood - I know some of them [the volunteers] will get bored after a few years, or they move on or decide they don't want to do the role anymore'. (SL3)*
>
> *'What does appear to oil the wheels of the voluntary sector is social media marketing' (SL4).*
>
> *'We've done quite a lot in terms of recruitment. They have been using the [VMS] to register all these people so that we are going through that platform, so hopefully that will leave a legacy of new enthused people who are involved' (SL8).*

Some strategic leads confirmed that they had robust volunteer recruitment particularly for events:

> *'If we've got an event on next week and need 300 volunteers… we put it on there, and volunteers come forward.' (SL8)*

'A lot of the time they find us. Every now and again, we'll get a random email or phone call saying you know, I've seen your sessions and we'd quite like to get involved. I do believe a lot of that is from where we've put something on a website advertising the sessions of volunteers and that sticks around. We have used the [VMS] service… So, those will be the main channels. CVS as well, they're brilliant. (SL9)

The strategic lead for a sports social enterprise in one of the boroughs, described a governance structure that seems relatively informal with a small management committee lacking formal volunteer management practices*:*

'The only formal structure really is that of the dominant volunteers, particularly the management type roles who are on the committee…We haven't got a volunteer strategy or a volunteer procedure' (SL1)

There was also a comment from the same strategic lead about the time cost of volunteering and being more of a constraint:

'Volunteering is quite precious in terms of people's time, particularly on non-training or non-match days.' (SL1)

6.2.3.2 Reward Systems

Some of the strategic leads placed importance on rewards, interpreting that rewards for volunteers could play a notable contribution to their satisfaction but with an awareness that there are currently debates on the best ways to reward volunteers.

'I've done workshops for our customers, about how to say thank you effectively' (SL2)

'With regard to rewarding volunteers across the 10 boroughs…I'd say it's possibly even more granular than locality based…It depends on which route into volunteering the person took, and for what reasons. So, in more formal environments…we do have national volunteering week. And depending on the budget… people will be given…the badges and the pens'(SL5)

'It's obvious to close that loop, isn't it? So, you can go to an opportunity and if somebody doesn't close that loop, so that thank you, [you] recognised that they turned up and it's finished. I think that this does make

a difference as a reward. Because then also if [you've] taken time to do that, remembered [they] were a volunteer and that [they] were there which is rewarding.' (SL7)

One of the strategic leads who works with a range of organisations discussed the challenges with rewarding volunteers:

'We tell all of our clients, the high-value rewards… have quite a negative impact on your volunteers…what tends to happen is though, you've got a T-Shirts for 10 hours, people will target 10 hours, and you lose them. You've gone to the trouble of buying them a T-Shirt and then you have lost them because they have got the T-Shirt because they have hit the target, they set themselves.' (SL2)

6.2.3.3 Training

There were also examples from the strategic leads that they also ensured planning was in place to progress athletes into coaching and volunteer roles.

'It tends to be when they get to the teens, one of the instructors or the senior instructors for example, will say I'm thinking of doing the coaching for Assistant Instructor' (SL6)
'We always committed to putting them on courses and giving qualifications… we'll give you those four things.' (SL8)

There was also a supportive and developmental approach to developing volunteers:

'Every CVS that I'm involved with, has absolutely insisted on prioritising training those volunteers and grassroots organisations into kind of coming and regrouping.' (SL5)

'We try and invest in them if we can… we'll put you on safeguarding, first aid, and [coaching] qualifications.' (SL9)

'We always committed to putting them [the volunteers] on courses, and given qualifications, we always say that there's certain things we want them to have, by the end of it anyway…we have that checklist of safeguarding, DBS, first aid and basketball qualification where, you know, we look at

those four things and say, right, you know, we'll give you those four things'. (SL9)

6.2.4 Secondary Documentation

6.2.4.1 Recruitment Practices

Some organisations had policies that explained the recruitment practices and committed to transparent processes:

> *'Different volunteering opportunities at The Union have different recruitment procedures in place. The [Education Institution] will ensure that recruitment procedures are fair and transparent for all volunteering roles'. (EI1, Volunteering Policy)*

> *'Staff and volunteers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, Parents/carers are assured that measures are taken to recruit only suitable people to work with children' (NGB6, Recruitment briefing paperwork)*

There were not many, but some organisations had detailed job descriptions/person specifications etc using very formal language and application processes and induction processes (NGB4, NBG6, NGB7, PC2):

> *'The main purpose of a volunteer induction is to communicate what a new volunteer can expect from your club and what your club expects from them. By formally introducing new volunteers to your facility and explaining their role, you give the volunteer confidence in their actions and help them feel comfortable within your environment'. (NBG7, website)*

The same organisation also had checklists and audit's that local clubs could use as part of their volunteer process:

> *Volunteer induction checklist; volunteer skills audit; role descriptor templates; volunteer sign-up sheet; thank you certificates; (NGB7, additional paperwork)*

One NGB promoted the variety of opportunities:

> *'The beauty of volunteering with the network is shown in its versatility. Whether you're… experienced… or complete novice, you can contribute your time through a variety of volunteer*

roles. For example, fundraising, event organisation, training…maintenance and much more'. (NGB4,website)

The same NGB had very clear sub sections on their web page for how to get involved in different opportunities, clubs and events.

One NGB only offered volunteer opportunities to those who were involved in the sport and the coach had to nominate them. There is no apparent route into volunteering on any other pathway…

'To become a Volunteer, please contact your club's coach and have them nominate you to us,' (NGB8, website).

One club was keen to expand the number of volunteers and had a web page where they were open to volunteers from a range of backgrounds:

[The Club] are looking for committed and enthusiastic people who want to get involved with one of Manchester's fastest growing community sports clubs and help us achieve our goal of being the most successful [the sport] club in England. We are happy to listen to people with a wide range of experience and expertise in coaching, marketing, club development and business management'. (VCSE Club3, website)

This was also true of some NGB's who has hosted large international events in the GM region recently:

'Experience is not necessary for any of the volunteer roles and all volunteers will be fully briefed, with a dedicated coordinator to guide you through your responsibilities and support you throughout the day. You will be made to feel very welcome by our event staff and will have the chance to see dynamic displays of [the sport] close up and at its best!' (NBG2, website)

You don't have to be a [sport] expert to volunteer in [sport]l. Whatever your motivation and commitment level you will be valued. Without this involvement, [sport] wouldn't be able to survive! (NGB6, website)

6.2.4.2 Reward systems

One club had very little in the way of policies or strategies relating to volunteers but did post on Facebook about their Annual Awards night giving out awards for *'Young Volunteers of the Year'* and '*Volunteers of the Year'* (Stockport Volleyball Club)

Many organisations celebrated and recognised their volunteers:

> *'[The Educational Institution} values the incredible contribution of all its volunteers and believes in recognising and rewarding this contribution. We celebrate all our volunteers at our annual Volunteering Awards, and we recognise outstanding projects or volunteers that have been especially innovative or made a real difference'. (EI1, Volunteering Policy)*
>
> *'The annual Awards recognise the great work carried out by volunteers across the UK, celebrating all those going the extra mile to support our community' (NGB4, website).*
>
> *'Each trainee receives printed course materials and a t-shirt. At the end of the course each [volunteer] receives a reference, certificate, 10 CPD points and a pin badge'. (VCSE Club3, website)*
>
> *'Recognition and rewards are rarely the motivation of volunteers, however, the importance of a simple "thank you" can't be understated'. (NBG6, website))*

6.2.4.3 Training

Some organisations were not advanced in their volunteer training:

> *We are working on developing a Volunteer Pathway to support your volunteer journey by offering a suite of online modules to support the needs of all of our volunteers so that you can access training at a time and place that suits you. (NGB1, website)*

One regional governing body has a very structured volunteering programme for young people where in return for 50 hours of volunteering they will also get a number of qualifications.

> *25 hours will be completed through an Active Leaders Qualification in which applicants will complete workshops delivered by [Regional NGB]. The qualification includes CPR and first aid awareness, basic safeguarding and risk management, preparation, planning, communication, marketing, budgeting, hands-on delivery and CV development. (VCSE Club3, pdf poster)*

One professional club's community arm also had a similar volunteer scheme for young people:

> *[Programme name] is a long-term volunteer programme providing skills, experiences, qualifications, and pathways into employment both within [club community arm] and across* ***our network of partner organisations.*** *It aims to inspire participants to never give up. As part of the programme, young people aged 16-25 from across various [club community arm] programmes will complete hours of volunteering whilst developing their skills and experience, helping them prepare for the world of work. (PC1, website)*

6.3 Summary from Findings

6.3.1 Theme 1: The Volunteer Experience – Identity, Power Dynamics, and Motivational Factors

The *Volunteer Experience* in the GM City-Region is shaped by a complex relationship between identity, the volunteers perceived value, and their motivations. Volunteers, volunteer leads and strategic leads all expressed a strong sense of the value of volunteers (López-Cabrera *et al*., 2020) but did not always associate 'helping' or club membership activities as volunteering (Hallman and Dickson, 2017)

Power dynamics between paid staff and volunteers remain a persistent tension. Some volunteers felt their contributions were undervalued due to their unpaid status, while others acknowledged the legitimacy of staff authority based on expertise and organisational affiliation. Volunteer leads and strategic leads recognised this imbalance and had tried to ensure that there are clear roles and divisions between the two groups. These power dynamics between paid staff and volunteers reflect the asymmetries identified in collaborative governance theory (Ansell and Gash, 2008).

Motivational factors ranged from altruistic (e.g. giving back to the community) to transactional (e.g. skills development and employability). This reflects both personal values and broader policy narratives that frame volunteering as a pathway to opportunity (Stebbins, 1996). Yet, these motivations are constrained by time and financial costs, with volunteers citing opportunity costs, transport expenses, and family sacrifices as barriers to sustained engagement.

6.3.2 Theme 2: Facilitation of Opportunities – Recruitment Practices, Reward Systems, and Training

The *Facilitation of Opportunities* across the GM City Region is marked by both innovation and fragmentation (Rhodes *et al.,* 2003). Recruitment practices vary widely, with multiple platforms and approaches operating across the region.

Training and development are central to volunteer engagement. Organisations that invest in training covering safeguarding, first aid, and sport-specific qualifications help build volunteer confidence and competence. These practices also reinforce trust and accountability, particularly in roles involving children and vulnerable groups. Volunteer leads play a crucial role in recruiting, mentoring, and supporting volunteers, though their positions are often underfunded or unstable (Berry and Manoli, 2018; Parnell *et al*., 2019).

Reward systems are largely informal, relying on recognition, inclusion, and personal growth. However, digital platforms are beginning to introduce gamification and tracking tools to enhance engagement (Hamari, Koivisto and Sarsa, 2014). Strategic leads also highlighted the use of KPIs and data systems to monitor participation, diversity, and impact (Houlihan and Green, 2009).

Chapter Seven Case Study Findings – Contextual Landscapes and Relational Foundations

7.0 Introduction to Findings

Chapter Seven examines the themes *Contextual Landscapes* and *Relational Foundations* broadening the focus to the contextual and relationship structures that shape volunteering practices within the GM City Region sports volunteering sector. The *Contextual Landscape* theme reviews policy, regional and external influences. The *Relational Foundations* theme presents the findings relating to belonging, organisational networking and how collaborative capacity is built. These themes build upon the experiences presented in Chapter Six, demonstrating how *The Volunteer Experience* and *Facilitation of Opportunities* connect to wider contextual and relational foundations within the GM City Region's sports volunteering landscape.

7.1 Theme 3- Contextual Landscapes: Policy, Regional and External Influences on Sports Volunteering

This theme positions collaborative governance in sports volunteering within broader contextual forces that shape its implementation and outcomes. The findings reveal how policy frameworks, regional characteristics, including historical legacies have had an impact on the opportunities for collaboration. The theme explores the influence of technological innovation on volunteering practices and other external influences.

7.1.1 Volunteers

7.1.1.1 Policy Influences

The policy shift to a skills agenda can be seen in the outcome that volunteers are aware of.

> *'My skill set has definitely grown and being able to build my CV without having to commit to a job' (V1)*
>
> *'The more volunteering, I do, the better it will be, the more experience I will pick up' (V1)*

During the interviews, the volunteers who were volunteering initially for future career development, often spoke about the benefits of volunteering not just from the experience provided but also through the network of people they met, and the wider opportunities offered.

> *'When I started [uni]…I wanted to try and get my hand into sports events because I had always had an interest in them, but*

I didn't have the experience to take me there and I found that volunteering was the best way to build that experience' (V1)

'When I came to Uni that changed completely because then I had a different look at volunteering… it became a different aspect of volunteering I didn't think of before, and that was more career development.' (V6)

'Originally it started because it was…emphasised that it was really important to volunteer, especially by lecturers to get the volunteer experience whilst you can, it looks really good on your CV'. (V8)

7.1.1.2 Regional Influences

There was little comment from the volunteers about regional policy influences but some of the volunteers confirmed that GM had more structure that any other geographical areas

'I grew up in Wales, so there was no…structural systems, so coming to Manchester… there's more of a structural system around volunteering and I got more understanding of, oh, it's more of a formal thing that you can do.' (V5)

There were also comments from the volunteers about the long-standing group who have volunteered within GM since the 2002 Commonwealth Games which had a huge impact on the region.

'They all had pin badges across their lanyards and then I realised that was thing the veteran volunteers did; they all wear their pin badges no matter what the event. It's a badge of pride.' (V1)

'It was mainly people who'd been volunteering for years.' (V12)

7.1.1.3 External Influences

The impact on the volunteer experience because of the pace of technology implementation was raised by volunteers with positives and concerns being raised. Some commented on how technology enables participation:

'The system is really good... [it] checks to make sure that the opportunities that go on there are already a relatively good standard.' (V5)

However, some of the volunteers described a process that did not always have a human element.

'For the…event it was advertised through the portal, so I just applied, then literally turned up' (V1)

'If, for example, I was hired for an opportunity I'd receive a text…the day before or prior to the event starting …explaining what was going to happen. Then I'd…get communication sometimes with the managers that were managing that specific event or specific role.' (V6)

One volunteer recognised the importance of in-person interaction:

'Face-to-face volunteering is just like... you can't replace it.' (V1)

7.1.2 Volunteer Leads

7.1.2.1 Policy Influences

There has been a blurring of the boundaries of sport, health and wellbeing,

'There is a focus of importance pre-Olympics, but sports policy is a bit lost now as the focus is on health. So, it doesn't quite understand whether it's a health policy, health and wellbeing policy or a sport policy. And you have this complete separation now where you've got elite sport on its own pathway that is now separating itself away from grassroots, because grassroots is focused on health, and wellbeing.' (VL4)

'Probably makes us adapt very much what our role is. And I think in role we are having to chop and change and pick stuff up or drop things last minute' (VL5)

Transparent governance is growing, particularly around data collection and reporting for KPIs, but limitations in capturing *'invisible volunteers'* (those unaware they are volunteering) (VL5) persist.

'Our KPIs look at how many providers are on [the VMS]… volunteers, opportunities, age group, people with disability…' (VL5)

Funding reductions have affected grassroots support:

> *'There is money around, but not to the extent that they used to be…Without wishing to sound critical. I think it's dropped off quite a lot... A few years ago, there was the team in the Northwest, 4…development officers... the money has dried up.' (VL1)*

> *'If you look at the top [of the NGB] it splits into participation and racing - it has always been about trying to introduce and create people at the grassroots level but when funding starts it's the participation side that gets cut, the racing side of the funding is still there…I think sometimes it can be that the national policy in that context is about winning medals and I can understand the impact that has on the level of funding we get but it's up to us to work out what you do with the ones who don't make it.' (VL1)*

> *'If you don't have money…it's hard to get things done'.(VL4)*

The funding reductions have led to regional organisations encouraging and supporting voluntary sports organisations to apply for funding

> *'We'll share [funding opportunities] with our clubs… not only 'here's a grant, go apply,' but we'll work with them to apply.' (VL5)*

Due to finding reductions, the volunteers leads also discussed how the cost of volunteering could also be a constraint for volunteers

> *''You have to make it easier for people to actually spend time at the club…I think generally speaking. It's timewise that they are short of and so they want to spend their time enjoying what they do.' (VL1)*

> *'Expense is up there, volunteering isn't cheap and it's not free for anyone involved, the labour is free, but it still has the rest of the costs associated with it such as transport costs. Then there is the opportunity cost as well, they could be working and making £10 an hour at that time rather than doing something for free.' (VL3)*

7.1.2.2 Regional Influences

The Volunteer Leads commented on how working across sectors in the region could lead to broader sector understanding,

> *'you'd see all the different charities and organisations and you felt like you were part of this one big thing because everyone's trying to achieve the same thing.' (VL4)*

There is however some lack of joined up thinking about sharing resources and opportunities:

> 'Local community clubs… want…gardeners for pitches or someone to be the treasurer… but they don't utilise [the VMS].' (VL5)

One volunteer lead discussed the GM identity where the region badges itself as unique :

> *'Greater Manchester is a significantly unique space' (VL5)*

In a similar vein to the volunteers perspective there was discussion about the group of long-standing volunteers.

> *'They all just seem to love it. They all seem to have been doing it for years and years and just love it and…I feel like they're waiting for the events to come back and to get back into it' (VL7)*
>
> *'There are key volunteers in Manchester, who do every event, and you see the same team faces.(VL5)*
>
> *'At the event... I went to a couple [of long-standing volunteers]... and said hi to them...' (V12)*

7.1.2.3 External Influences

One of the volunteer leads commented on the impact of major events as way to promote volunteering in the sector:

> *'Volunteering, became part of the national conscience as a result of London 2012 (VL5)*

Many of the Volunteer Leeds commented on the use of and pace of technology, especially related to the use of Volunteer Management Systems (VMS).

'We also have the volunteering system where all roles will be posted... my job is making as many people as possible aware that that system exists' (VL3)

'When you've WhatsApp groups…your quick message in a group, it takes out that whole meeting element, which…allows more time' (VL5)

'I use that system to upload the event, or the information of the event and then they already had a [group] of volunteers already' (VL6)

'I think technology will help…because I think historically it was to do with awareness. So, I think clubs weren't able to get the reach to volunteers. That's why they always have the same volunteers coming down. (VL8).

There were discussions from the Volunteer Leads about the impact of the Covid -19 Pandemic particularly around the feeling that there was a lost cohort of volunteers/committee members and athletes:

'we've missed out on a group of either volunteers or committee members or athletes because of the pandemic.' (VL8)

One of the volunteer leads talked about how the loss of these groups meant that they had lost some of those traditions, where committee posts are passed on each year,

'We lost the historical passing over traditions and that's really what keeps club going. It's like that feeling that, you know, it's like it's a proud thing to take over, you know, it's proud thing to lead, it's proud thing to be that volunteer' (VL9)

7.1.3 Strategic Leads

7.1.3.1 Policy Influences

Some of the Strategic Leads were critical of the lack of strong leadership from government in volunteering policy:

'The leadership from government has been a bit hit and miss, to say the least. There's been a lack of leadership...' (SL2)

However, one Strategic Lead critiqued how there could be too much formalisation, especially for informal volunteering ecosystems:

> *'If you're talking to a mutual aid group that doesn't even want to have a constitution, the idea that I go to them with a label, or a badge is just ludicrous' (*SL5)

There were also discussions about policy shifts to a more skills-based agenda which could have positive outcomes for volunteers

> *'It just adds that extra thing to their DNA and enhances and brings to life their CVs, and it can only help them flourish, be good citizens and be in a better position when applying for things in the future' (SL1)*
>
> *'The pushing people through the coaching qualifications was kind of seen as a way to kind of modernise and professionalise the sector' (SL4)*
>
> *'If you haven't got those experiences and opportunities, then you know, your likelihood of ending up where you need to be, might be less so than if you've got them' (SL5)*

One of the Strategic Leads commented on the cyclical nature of funding describing it as the '*shifting sands of policy' (SL4).*

Due to the cyclical nature of funding and austerity measures budget cuts impacted on many of the Strategic Leads work.

> *'I think that is really kind of the mentality across the whole sport... that there's not an enormous amount of money floating around… so you just kind of have to get on with it yourselves. (SL6)*
>
> *'[the NGB] actually scrapped that role [disability officer] and made it more generic. And then the whole disability focus has sort of disappeared by the looks of it, which is a shame' (SL9)*

One Strategic Lead's department was affected by austerity budget cuts which ultimately led to the withdrawal of the volunteer manager role within that council:

> *'And then as we got towards sort of 2012/13 budget cuts started to hit. And we had to review our priorities… so, we withdrew from a full-time volunteer manager effectively. I think that was a mistake personally because there's nobody waking up every day, driving it forward'* (SL8)

Funding issues meant one club had to change their type of company from private provider who was relying on volunteers to a community interest as this opened more channels of funding and support .

> *'We rely heavily on volunteers but initially traded as a sole trader before adapting and becoming a community interest organisation…it does open us up to more funding opportunities and it's…pitched as a halfway house between limited company and charity' (SL9)*

Many of the strategic leads commented on the need for KPIs as a metric for funders but that feedback, testimonials and storytelling are also important to tell the story of what is happening within organisations.

> *'I can't think of many things I'm involved with, where there's not a value in collecting that data in terms of statistics...that helps you to evaluate return of investment...but at the same time getting deeper with open-ended questions and getting some proper feedback and testimonials or even complaints, I think both of them have got so much value''* (SL1)

> *'I think KPIs are…just something of a confidence indicator, really, they're a way of getting you to a point of action with the people that are funding you. They're a confidence agreement that you can put in place to say, these are the things that we're going to capture, which give all partners the confidence to know that it'll go ahead with some rigour and some quality assurance behind it. I suppose you just need to…set up the project in a way that that feels acceptable to all of the partners involved. If it feels like a tokenistic gesture just to please a funder, then it's going to undermine the whole project. But if it's done…to keep the quality right, and…if the volunteers experience is part of that dashboard,*

part of those KPIs… that can be a really positive thing' (SL3)

''My line manager still wants the KPIs. So how do I turn something qualitative into something quantitative? I think my approach in that space is that you can always turn quality into quantity. You cannot turn quantity into quality. So, you know, if you need KPIs, you will be able to extrapolate KPIs from storytelling' (SL5)

'Each CVS has its own distinct identity and way of operating... [Regional Organisation] is a space where there are no KPIs.' (SL5)

'Because it is…more difficult to…quantify, everyone being more socially active and getting fitter without scientifically testing their fitness or…measuring someone's confidence levels...So we prefer case studies, parents giving feedback, but doesn't always line up properly with funding bids, which is a concern of ours' (SL9)

7.1.3.2 Regional Influences

The strategic leads were able to offer the most insight into how the history of the GM City Region, the regional influences and the structure of sport within GM and have impacted on volunteering. One Strategic Lead commented on Manchester's historically weak voluntary sector, stemming from deindustrialisation and socio-economic deprivation:

'*Because of the demographics of Manchester, the volunteering base was always low… from the 1970s through to the 1990s, there was a collapse of the voluntary sector/sports club's structure.'* (SL8)

Many of the strategic leads commented on the complexity of the space in GM due to the number of stakeholders included:

'*They are trying not to work in silos as much but by the very structure of sport…the way it is funded and the people involved in it, and the conflicts of interest between the commercial or the community. It's still quite difficult…for some of these things, some are*

systemic and just the nature of the systems that are in place, there is a lot of legacy that we are dealing with'. (SL2)

'I think one of the difficult things in volunteering… is that you're always working in a world where you've got a lot of different stakeholders. And the success of a policy depends on your ability to align their motivations and priorities in the right way at the right time'. (SL3)

'it's managing that tension between allowing each locality the freedom to have the identity and the means to operate in a place that works for them. But equally, say, for example, for Sport England, we have no such thing as 10 Local pilots, we have one GM, one local pilot that happens to operate in 10 localities. So how do you then create that meta narrative, City Region conversation that somehow encapsulates all the nuances' (SL5)

'you've got the complexity of… operating a variety of spaces. And each project will have its own defined outcomes'. (SL6)

There was also comments about systems leadership within the region tied to devolution, which operates with a loosely structured, networked design across 10 boroughs, emphasising flexibility and *'test and learn'* models:

GM probably is in a better position than other areas of the country to lead on that. Partly because we have devolution on our side. And so, more flexibility in the ways of working but also a lot of system leaders, I think in our system approach as opposed to…silo [working. Collaborations with the occasional touch point' (SL5)

'It's up to the community in [that borough]... to agree to it, shape it themselves, and then we help them to do that.' (SL7)

'So, it's taking the model and testing it in these different spaces to see how it works best, but then also kind of allowing the energy to go where it goes.' (SL7)

'So technically, we don't have [a hierarchy], but we do.' (SL7)

> *'Are we going to replicate? It depends on the relationship really…we don't care if you don't get people moving more but we want you to try weird and wonderful things.'* (SL7)

The long-standing group of volunteers were also discussed by strategic leads:

> *'And a lot of them were volunteers at the Commonwealth Games, actually. We have a hardcore…cohort of 200-300, who will volunteer for every event every time, and they know where they want to stand and where they want to be…. you know, they're here for 25 years, and they're not going anywhere. (SL8)*

7.1.3.3 External Influences

The impact of mega events on the direction of volunteering was raised:

> *'There was quite an intensification of investment into volunteering programmes… with the Commonwealth Games in 2002.' (SL8)*

Technology development and the modernisation of volunteering leading to the development of VMS in the GM City Region and these advancements were discussed by many of the strategic leads:

> *''There was an appetite for a shift towards digital, this happened in 2008/2009, the Olympic Games was on the horizon, Facebook 2007 becomes a big thing for us in the UK, so people were getting used to having their own accounts, being able to browse the internet on their phones, the iPhone had landed... So, apps were starting, people/young people were becoming more digitally savvy and more comfortable doing things for themselves' (SL2)*

> *'It's forcing the tech, opportunity almost forces organisations to raise their game in terms of the experience that they're offering volunteers'* (SL3)

> *'We've now created a provider portal… we will not signpost any young person unless we're convinced, they've got all the things in place.' (SL8)*

One of the original developers of one VMS model commented on the development of the system as way to consolidate diverse entry points into volunteering (schools, coaching, community clubs, FE/HE, events).

> *'So, we had these five routes in to volunteering in the city... in the middle, I put this concept of [VMS].'* (SL4)

The VMS has added on gamification as a way to gain engagement with younger generations of volunteers:

> *'...you can gamify, you can have the hours, you can compete...* (SL2)

The change in the use of technology to now include gamification was discussed and of value for younger generations, terming them *'digital natives'* (SL3)

The system integrated exchange-based governance by linking qualifications to hours volunteered, effectively creating a structured pathway and accountability mechanism: *'*

> *You pledge that if you want a qualification that you have to do 20 hours... the club... would say, yes, they've completed the 25 hours, we would release the certificate.'*

Linked to VMS there was discourse around the merits of developing *'Volunteer passports'* as way to encourage flexibility in volunteering and for all documentation to the volunteer to be held in one place:

> *'Passporting [has] become shorthand for how do we improve infrastructure and volunteering? And that's, helpful because it allows you to go into lots of different areas but it's really unhelpful because it's so broad you almost don't know where to start.' (SL3)*
>
> *'They include ...agreements between organisations sharing volunteers on the strategic rationale for it, and what standards they're going to agree in common.'* (SL3)

One strategic lead commented that their organisation's VM system represents an attempt to creating an institutional framework for collaboration between different stakeholders in volunteering. They aim to create open standards:

> *'The volunteer can move freely around, different services and different organisations. Some people call it passporting...' (SL2)*
>
> '...give the volunteer choice, give them say, agency in their volunteering and make it easy for them to do it... (SL2)

However, one of the Strategic Leads from a Regional Organisation commented that there are still elements of *'digital poverty and digital exclusion'* (SL3) which would be a constraint if the technology and volunteer passports were to be the only routes into volunteering.

> *'If it's a barrier to people's engagement then, you know, you're putting up barriers rather than taking them down, which is our job. You know, in local government, your job is not to make it harder, it's to make it easier'* (SL8)

The other conflicting viewpoint is that because there are perceived fragmented power structures it can make collaboration challenging:

> *'...the technology has not hit maturity yet. So yes, they are getting better at it, yes, they are trying not to work in silos as much but by the very structure of sport, in terms of the way it is funded and the people involved in it.' (SL2)*

One final external influence that emerged was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the strategic leads described it as *'the biggest earthquake that's ever happened to volunteering'* (SL5). Many strategic leads discussed how this could be an opportunity to '*reimagine'* (SL5) or *'revitalise'* (SL2) volunteering by taking advantage of the popularity and interest in volunteering to improve the infrastructure, engage with different groups of people who might volunteer. Some of the strategic leads were also hoping for some of the benefits that occurred during the pandemic such as:

> *'The flexibility, the lack of red tape that everybody talks about can really only be a positive'* (SL5).

There were some discussions of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic especially around the Lost generation of participants and volunteers

> *' A jilted generation'* (SL4)
>
> 'A *lost generation of volunteers'* (SL5).

7.1.4 Secondary Documentation

7.1.4.1 Policy Influences

There were references to national strategy and policy documents to inform the organisation's volunteering strategy.

> *'The Vision for Volunteering sets out an ambitious future for how we can let go of the volunteering practices that no longer serve us and tackle some of volunteering's enduring inequalities. This aligns to our vision for transforming the future of movement, physical activity, and sport-based volunteering in Greater Manchester, and there is a clear synergy between the Vision for Volunteering, Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy, and GM Moving in Action'. (GMSO1, Web site).*

One NGB referred to a wider sport strategy that committed to developing a volunteer strategy:

> *'The 2022 Community Strategy included a commitment to produce a Volunteer Strategy to grow, retain, support, develop, value and diversify our volunteer network' (NBG7)*

One regional organisation discussed how devolution had an impact on the ability to operationalise a whole systems approach:

> *'We therefore take **a whole system approach** to align all the key influences on whether someone is active. Greater Manchester partners have been operationalising a whole systems approach to active lives since devolution in 2015. Devolution gave us freedom that provided a head start in terms of collaboration and innovation, which others could learn from and which we can build on. A range of improvements in health were achieved' (GMSO1, blog)*

7.1.4.2 Regional Influences

One organisation was keen to develop their collaboration to a wider audience:

> *'Exploring how we can take a more collaborative, joined-up approach to volunteering in Greater Manchester, tackle underlying trends, inequalities and barriers to make it more accessible, meaningful and inclusive, and determine what training, support, resources and*

funding is needed across the system'. (GMSO1, blog)

One regional organisation had sought to understand the volunteering landscape in sport, physical activity and movement and commissioned research to understand the landscape and how relationships are built between VCSE organisations and voluntary led sport and physical activity groups:

'Seeking to understand the Greater Manchester (GM) volunteering landscape in sport, activity and movement. The aim is to specifically understand what is needed to make giving time easy, meaningful and supported by working alongside the VCSE sector to develop a systemic approach to volunteering across GM' (GMSO1, Research Brief)

One organisation had their full history of development from 2007 starting from a *'community driven'* VMS for one council to their expansion across the region (and wider) (TK, website)

7.1.4.3 External Influences

One organisations signposts to external support:

We've compiled a list of resources to support volunteers, organisations, clubs and groups. There is no one size fits all to meeting the needs of local people, so whether its champions training, community engagement or connecting with local networks, if you are looking for guidance on volunteering, or connecting with your local infrastructure organisation, you will find information to help you below. (GMSO1, website)

7.2 Theme 4 – Relational Foundations: Building Collaboration

This theme examines the interpersonal and affective dimensions that underpin successful collaborative governance in sports volunteering. Building collaborative capacity requires the development of trust between stakeholders but also how different organisations and stakeholders navigate differences in priorities, processes and professional cultures.

7.2.1. Volunteers

7.2.1.1 Belonging

Belonging was discussed by the volunteers in many of the interviews and tying it back to the social/networking element of volunteering suggests that a feeling of belonging is important and that the social elements of volunteering are important:

> *'I would say within the organisations that I volunteer with now I feel very much the sense of belonging... 'The team know me; the parents know me. So now it's… I'm…ingrained in the foundation now.' because it's such a grassroots sport as well you have the feeling and belong to the team and that you bring a lot of value' (V1)*
>
> *'Well, it makes me happy, that's a fact.' (V5)*
>
> *'I met some amazing people from it.' (V12)*

Some volunteers specifically mentions the importance of symbolic elements like uniform and merchandise to help with the feeling of belonging and team integration:

> *'So, [at the event], you get a T-Shirt, your all part of the same team'(V5)*
>
> *'Having uniform or something for people to identify you with the club, who haven't been introduced to you or perhaps don't really know who you are. I think that really helps with helping you feel like you are part of the community' (V10)*
>
> *'I got a [club] polo shirt, which all the staff wear...helped out because then other staff members or players and things like that associate you with the club a lot more.' (V10)*

One volunteer described how being part of the volunteering team was also to be part of the community:

'There was a big sense of team, team bonding, team community, felt a lot of the time before the event started.' (V5)

'The professional workforce, that support, volunteering and sport... it's quite a small community.' (V5)

'When your part of a team, you feel like you've got a responsibility to do what needs to be done.' (V5)

A couple of the interviewees who volunteered across clubs and different events described how paid staff actively mentored and empowered volunteers and how generally everyone was welcoming:

'With [professional club] I was paired up with their Event Intern... and he was like my guide until about maybe four or five games in.' (V1)

'At [the organisation]... everyone was there to sort of help you out and nobody was there to be like 'Oh, you're just a volunteer.'' (V1)

'No difference between us, we were just treated the same, which was really nice.' (V12)

The interviewees acknowledged the importance of the volunteer manager role to their feeling of belonging and their development:

'The Volunteer Lead... was the go-to person, received the e-mail from, she was the person I would ask questions to, and she was the first person I met on the day.' (V5)

'I feel like volunteer managers are crucial for events because I relied on them to help me through it and give me information, they were all amazing' (V7)

'I think the biggest help is that [the volunteer manager] I work with has been in my shoes, and he's kind of had the experience volunteering… when he was at uni…The biggest thing when I first started, he said, I've volunteered in lots of different places. And he said, I know how annoying it is when you spend a day and you've gone somewhere, and then you just sit around, and people don't really talk to you that much. He's always said, from the off, he'll try and get

me involved in as much as he can. He's always introduced me to do everyone he speaks to or tried to involve me in the conversations or will explain afterwards what this was about.' (V10)

'The three volunteer managers... made me feel really comfortable... they were just so friendly and really helped me…' (V12)

7.2.1.2 Developing Collaborative Capacity

The volunteers interviewed rarely used formal terminology like *collaboration* to describe their experiences. Instead, volunteers spoke about developing social connections, feeling empowered and the importance of clear communication.

Some volunteers described how social connections and informal relationships were an important element of their volunteering experience:

'So, at first, I had so much fun. I [asked] can I come back and do [this] every single day, and they let me. And then from there I just signed up and did everything simply because I love it. So, it's just, it's nice to meet new people. That social element really, isn't it?' (V5)

'I just like doing different things, like meeting new people, chatting to people… volunteering is really interesting just to be a part of.' (V12)

The structures and processes to facilitate events were appreciated by some of the interviewees:

'[The Event] made such an effort... inviting the volunteers into the arena... Everyone got to be on the stage, take photos.' (V1)

'a lot of the time before the event started and you've got all the volunteering staff together in one place, talking about how the day is going to go.' (V6)

Empowerment and providing opportunities for autonomy and increased responsibility showed trust in the volunteers:

'Until I felt more confident and until I'd been there a [number] of times, then they trusted me to be on my own.' (V1)

'We're able to have conversations about me becoming…a volunteer ambassador for the organisation.' (V5)

'I…enjoyed the volunteering opportunities where I was left to my own devices such as the 'Run Leader.' (V6)

'I was left to my own devices to manage my section of the event.' (V10)

Clear, open communication and leadership availability was important to the volunteers to ensure transparency and understanding of the volunteering task:

'I'd receive a text…the day before or prior to the event starting, basically explaining what was going to happen…I would then know exactly who I was working with that day. I'd also know who the most senior member of that event was.' (V6)

'They've got very much, an open-door policy.' (V7)

Volunteers also spoke about how designated leadership roles helped with communication and the volunteer experience:

'There was a Volunteer Manager, and then within that you'd have multiple coordinators working in different areas of the event.' (V6)

'...now there's a new ownership in there, we actually have a mentor. So, she's the lady who's the Events Manager.'(V8)

When volunteers had a positive volunteering experience they wanted to expand their engagement, leading to more commitment and development:

'I got into sports volunteering in 2017... And then over the last four years I basically worked up to leading their volunteer team.' (V1)

'The more volunteering I did… I built those relationships' (V9)

Some of the volunteers were also able to see the bigger picture and contextualise their learning and experiences:

'It helps put what you're hearing about the organisations and the stuff that you hear in class into a bit of real-world contexts.' (V5)

'When I look back on the volunteering I did as a coach. I know definitely that, I don't want to be a coach.' (V5)

There were also some discussions of constraints which could have negative impact on the volunteer experience:

One volunteer discussed how they had a cultural perception barrier which getting involved in volunteering helped to change:

'Growing up, you get a perception of volunteering is it's weird or it's for old people.' (V5)

There were some comments from volunteers about organisations needing to improving their inclusivity and integration:

'It was a boys club... I remember turning up and literally having a bright pink jumper on and being 'm a little bit out of place here.' (V1)

'I tried a few more [events] and realised that not all are as fun as they say so then that's where I was like, okay, there's, there's more to this than just… turning up.' (V5)

'I'm probably in my little bubble… I just know this is what I do here… rather than venture out.' (V10)

'I was a bit on edge. At first, I didn't really… feel like I knew a lot about volunteering.' (V12)

7.2.2 Volunteer Leads

7.2.2.1 Belonging

There were not as many comments relating to belonging from the volunteer leads, but one volunteer lead commented that as part of their role leading on an international event they do prioritises being welcoming and respectful:

'You want them to feel welcome and ingrained... volunteers give up a huge amount of time.' (VL7)

There were however discussions about building relationships with the volunteers and ensuring they knew where to get support:

'There was this one volunteer [who] always rang me... she was really lovely.' (VL6)

'The message that we're saying is we are here, if you ever feel alone, you know, just pop into the [organisation]' (VL8)

7.2.2.2 Organisational Networking

Networking at the strategic level seemed to be facilitative and supportive for all stakeholders within that organisation:

'You need…to be able to hold that space, protect that space, but also preach the importance of physical activity.' (SL7)

'The most important thing you have to do in these spaces [is] just listen and not talk.' (SL7)

One of the strategic lead who runs a large members only club discussed how important it was to bridge the generational gaps and network with all ages to encourage engagement:

'We have a lot of families… I'm that link from the very old members… and the people… with young families.' (SL6)

7.2.2.2 Developing Collaborative Capacity

The role of the 'Volunteer Lead' (whether formally or in capacity of Chair or equivalent) is viewed as important to engage with the community, delegate, identify potential or mentor:

'I'm around to help the new Training Principal, I'm around to give advice' (VL1)

'I've got one person in mind in particular who said no I definitely don't want to teach people…and then I persuaded them to do the course' (VL1)

'By the 3rd game I was like oh hi, you're such a person's dad...' (VL2)

'I had nine people on my committee, and a really dedicated vice chair...I trusted him and the team.' (VL8)

The Volunteer Lead at one of the GM universities mentions checking in with volunteers *'after they've applied and then... again like a month or two into their role,'* (VL3) which provides some process transparency.

Some of the volunteer leads discussed how their personal volunteer backgrounds added legitimacy to their role as leaders:

> *'I know what they like to do but we do need to stretch them occasionally' (VL1)*
>
> *'I feel like sometimes, how can I sit there and ask all this of different volunteers when you're not doing it yourself?'(VL5)*

Some of the Volunteer Leads also discussed the pride they felt when volunteers moved on to other volunteering or paid roles within the region and how they like to communicate this to their networks:

> *'A lot of youngsters will see it [getting a coaching qualification] as an opportunity to earn some money in the summer holidays. You might lose them; they will go away to …Uni and things. You've got to take a broader view and say…we've introduced an instructor to the sport and they clear off to Uni but if they join a club there and they do some instructing it's for the sport as a whole. We may have lost them, but they are still in the sport' (VL1)*
>
> *'We're working with [A 6th form College]… some students volunteered, then got paid work.' (VL5)*
>
> *'A Netball club … engaged local schools to find kids who'd never accessed sport… now some have joined the club.' (VL5)*
>
> *'They all just seem to love it. They all seem so [keen]... I feel like they're waiting for the events to come back...' (VL6)*
>
> *'If you're posting [on Social Media] about things that they are doing, they see that care, and that you're proud of what they do.' (VL8)*

One volunteer lead discussed the importance of the community connections and networks but that they needed to:

'Understand the local community [in areas like] 'Hulme, Moss Side and Fallowfield' (VL3)

There were however some challenges discussed by the volunteer leads, one volunteer discussed how wider integration is needed throughout the region:

'That's probably one of the biggest issues… people are very insular to their sport or interest.' (VL5)

Some volunteer leads also discussed how longstanding traditional models (e.g., same committee members for years) can be problematic for bringing new volunteers into the organisation:

'A lot of clubs… have to have an AGM every year… often it stands the same if people want to stay.' (VL5)

'In almost every club there is a smallish nucleus of people who are willing to do things' (VL8)

7.2.3 Strategic Leads

7.2.3.1 Belonging

Volunteer leads were aware of the community bonds that can develop through sport and volunteering:

'A sense of community, particularly our more community focused opportunities and clubs can be really beneficial to understand the local community' (SL1)

'It is very much a community. People… muck in because if you don't, it just won't happen.'(SL6)

One of the strategic leads who had volunteered in numerous roles along the pathway to attaining the current position held within the club commented '*that was my friendship group*' (SL6).

7.2.3.2 Organisational Networking

The Volunteer Leads commented that their role means they acts primarily as a facilitator and network, connecting volunteers to opportunities rather than directing them:

'We essentially act as a broker, just connecting the people together.' (VL3)

The importance of ongoing engagement and networking with members, family and the community was also discussed

> *'The biggest challenge is to keep bringing in new blood. Because I know that some of them will get bored after few years.' (VL1)*

> *'You get stale after a while. I think it's good to introduce some new blood' (VL1)*

One of the volunteer leads discussed that they really look forward to the impact of partners coming together for events or projects

> *'The main impact I'd love to see at [the tournament] would be the interaction between volunteers, stakeholders and fans, commercial teams, like anyone that's on site. So yeah, obviously, you can say that the volunteers are the backbone with the workforce' (VL8).*

7.2.3.3 Developing Collaborative Capacity

What came through strongly form the strategic leads is a willingness to work with others collaboratively:

> *'It's nice to go to another forum and have a chat with other people about what their challenges are...what works, what doesn't work, because we are all into learning and seeing the ways we can keep driving the club forward' (SL1)*

> *'We still stand by this belief that each of these little sectors and business areas, be it sport, be it events, be it health...or volunteer centres. Each has their own sovereignty, their own data, their own audience but those things can be amplified if you can bring them together' (SL2)*

> *'We are genuinely coming together... there is the person and the place at the heart of everything.'* (SL5)

> *'Bring local people from the community into a room together... to say, we exist, we can help you... and vice versa.' (SL7)*

'Who's talking to each other that wasn't talking to each other two years ago?'' (SL7)

The strategic leads also described how the role of the volunteer manager was able to build trust:

'The volunteer manager is the person that holds that relationship often…unsighted or unappreciated from other elements of their organisation.' (SL3)

'You still need that volunteer leader...you can't have a machine... managing you on the day.' (SL3)

'We are relying on people to… keep you safe… if you're in trouble, they're there to help.' (SL6)

The strategic leads also felt a responsibility to drive co-production and mutual understanding:

'The success of a policy depends on your ability to align their motivations and priorities in the right way at the right time.' (SL3)

'Let's look at what we already have… revisit [community conversations]… do they still resonate with you?' (SL5)

'You can replicate models of work, but you can't parachute in specific ideas... You need to have an idea of what worked and why.' (SL7)

'What was the conversation? What did we talk about? Where was the energy?' (SL7)

On some interviews the shared mission using sport as a vehicle for social inclusion came through very strong:

'Even if no one learns [the sport]… we use [the sport] just as a vehicle to improve people's health, well-being and social interaction etc.' (SL9)

Strategic Leads were aware that there is a noted divide between sectors with one strategic lead describing the challenges faced when two different sectors need to work together:

'It is literally two worlds colliding, speaking very different languages fundamentally doing the same thing... sport sits somewhat separate.' (SL5)

One of the strategic leads discussed how a lack of joined up thinking mean that multiple organisations all with the same aims and objectives could repeat the work the other is doing.

'There are potentially lots…of people who are asking the same person, 'what matters to you in a place?' And the unintended consequence of that is that the person feels like they're talking to the wind because nothing happens as a result of it. And then the little bit of a distrust to the system where I've heard people genuinely say, 'Do you lot not talk to each other?'' (SL5)

The strategic leads stressed the need for clear frameworks, especially in policy and digital systems:

'Most of the people that I've talked to suggest that you do the kind of cultural conversations first...then you have the tech conversation…So your KPIs should reflect [your vision] (SL4)

'So, it's quite hard to stay on top of them all... there is a big knowledge gap and awareness gap of these other systems.' (SL7)

'It's a long-term journey'(SL8)

7.2.4 Secondary Documentation

7.2.4.1 Belonging

There was very little reference to belonging throughout all the secondary data and organisations but one NGB did have a section in their volunteering strategy about valuing the volunteer.

'VALUE the volunteer network. Our sport simply wouldn't take place without volunteers and it's important they feel valued. We need to better recognise, reward and celebrate the invaluable contribution they make. We need to listen to our volunteers and proactively seek their views to help inform the development and delivery of current and future activity' (NGB7. Volunteering Strategy document)

7.3.4.2 Networking

One of the councils reported how work on an initiative to change attitudes to cycling meant a network or organisations came together:

'The sector's collective work contributes significantly to Manchester's key strategic outcomes, responding to challenges while focusing on young people, health, the

environment, and infrastructure. This…approach is shaping safer and more vibrant communities through targeted investment and collaboration'. (C1, Repot to Parliament)

Deeper collaboration with targeted communities and strategic partners has been crucial to creating a fairer and more inclusive Manchester

7.2.4.3 Developing Collaborative Capacity

There was acknowledgement from some organisations that better collaboration was needed:

> *To fulfil this ambition, of a more co-ordinated approach to volunteering across Greater Manchester is needed. To develop this shared approach, we need to better understand the landscape of movement, physical activity and sport-based volunteering across the City Region, and what is needed to make this more easy, meaningful and supported. (GMSO1, Web site).*
>
> *We have been working closely with colleagues from [a regional organisation], [a university] and [a Council]... which will help us to create a collective understanding of how to develop a systemic approach to volunteering in movement, physical activity and sport across Greater Manchester. We have also been working alongside a VCSE Volunteering Advisory Group, who have...knowledge of what the picture looks like on the ground, across different sectors, communities, and places. (GMSO1, Web site).*
>
> *'I joined over 50 people at [event space] in Central Manchester to explore how leadership, workforce, and volunteering can help active lives for all. This event was a hosted by [various organisations]. Our event brought together a diverse group...to come together to reflect on what's working, explore new ideas, and shape what comes next. (GMSO1, blog)*

Some organisations discussed how they were in effect a brokerage system matching to volunteer opportunities with a range of partners:

> *'As part of the Volunteering service offered by [the educational institution], we work with external organisations to put their opportunities on our online volunteering portal for students to browse. Brokering opportunities in this way gives students the chance to access a wealth of information about local, relevant volunteering opportunities all in one place. It is also a valuable avenue through which organisations, no matter how big or small, can recruit volunteers from the…student population' (EI1, website)*

> *'We work with many providers and partners to advertise their exciting volunteering opportunities on the [VMS] platform'. (GMSO3, website)*

> *'We work with around 30 community organisations to provide a wide range of opportunities which include one off events and regular placements with schools, sports clubs and governing bodies. All you need is an interest in sport, a few spare hours a month and a desire to make sport happen for others'. (EI3, website)*

Some organisations talked about their community

> *'With a thriving community of over 60 junior athletes and more than 40 adult members, the club has a Super League men's team, a Division 1 women's team, and competitive junior teams. Our club is dedicated to promoting [the sport] excellence at all levels, fostering both competitive spirit and community engagement'. (VCSE Club2, website)*

> *'Our Story. Volunteering. Community. Collaboration' (VMS1, website)*

One organisation discussed their place in the sector and who they work with:

> ***Connecting communities through volunteering.*** *Our sector support spans the health, universities, culture, charity, VCSE, local authority, events and corporate markets….Our desire to connect communities through volunteering has spurred on several…versions of [the VMS]. (VMS1, website)*

> *'We are local infrastructure organisations operating strategically and collaboratively; our shared purpose is to champion local voluntary and community action and social enterprise across the City Region in order to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Greater Manchester's people and communities'. (GMSO2, website)*

Many of the organisations advertised their partners in the form of logo tiles on their web pages (can't be shown because of anonymity)

One of the volunteer centres has a forum for volunteer leads:

> *'The…Forum is a chance for people who are responsible for involving volunteers in the work of their organisation, whether as their paid job or as a volunteer themselves, to come together. It is a peer support space facilitated by Volunteer Centre*

> *Manchester, a space to share ideas and resources that you have found useful and to seek support and advice from other volunteer coordinators in the city'. (CVS1, website)*

A review of a local pilot project found that creating a steering group led to improved collaboration within the VCSE sector:

> *'The initial steering group was quite traditional in approach, there were many senior leaders involved and much of the focus fell on reporting and giving updates. This high-level buy in and influence was vital for the early stages of the Local Pilot, once we had secured this, we recognised that working holistically across systems and sectors needed something different to this traditional approach…Building relationships within the new steering group has removed the need for hierarchical reporting. Instead, it has created a place of trust where successes, challenges and learnings are shared. (GMSO1, Blog)*

7.3 Summary from Findings

7.3.1 Theme 3: Contextual Landscapes: Policy , Regional and External Factors

The analysis of *Contextual Landscapes* revealed how policy frameworks, regional networks, and external influences create both opportunities and constraints for collaborative engagement in sports volunteering. While strategic leads emphasised the benefits of devolved governance structures and regional partnerships in Greater Manchester (Deas, 2014; Ward *et al*., 2015) and commented on the impacts of national policy direction volunteers did not recognise those broader policy influences but may have been aware of the outcomes such as improvement in skills from the skills agenda (Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012). However, regional influences particularly the GM City Region's collaborative culture and established networks emerged as significant enablers of cross-organisational working (Rhodes, 1997; Grix and Phillpots, 2011; Bradford, Hills and Johnston, 2016) with all participant groups recognising the unique advantages of the GM City Region's approach to sports volunteering.

7.3.2 Theme 4: Relational Foundations: Building Collaboration

The **Relational Foundations** theme demonstrated that building collaborative capacity requires more than formal structures or policy frameworks - it depends fundamentally on creating conditions for belonging, trust, and shared understanding. Volunteers consistently

emphasised the importance of belonging (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2021) and communication, while volunteer and strategic leads highlighted the importance of the Volunteer lead role between volunteers and strategic management. Strategic leads acknowledged the challenge of moving from traditional hierarchical approaches, working across sectors and moving towards a more collaborative model that can respond to community needs (Misener and Misener, 2017). The secondary documentation revealed aspirations for collaborative working that were not always reflected in operational practices.

Chapter Eight – Analysis and Discussion

8.0 Introduction to the Analysis and Discussion

This chapter analyses the research findings through the theoretical framework of Ansell and Gash's (2008) collaborative governance model, analysing how sports volunteering within the GM City Region both reflects and extends our understanding of collaborative processes. Chapter Six presented the empirical data organised the first two themes identified, which were *The Volunteer Experience* and *Engagement Mechanisms*. Chapter Seven presented the remaining themes of *Contextual Landscapes* and *Relational Foundations.*

Reviewing the lived experiences of stakeholders in sports volunteering against theoretical constructs, this chapter demonstrates how collaborative governance works in practice, focusing on the following sections of the Ansell and Gash (2008) model, starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership and collaborative processes. The analysis reveals both alignment and deviations from Ansell and Gash's (2008) model. While their framework provides a structure that can be used to understand collaborative aspects in sports volunteering, the research analysis identifies extensions to the model, particularly regarding the role of volunteer identity and volunteer infrastructure, belonging and the place-based influences of the GM City Region. More broadly this also reflects the growing role of volunteering and civil society organisations in collaborative governance working.

The following analysis is structured around the key components of the Ansell and Gash (2008) model, with each section using quotes from the interviews and secondary documentation and connecting to the theoretical concepts. Where the data reveals aspects of volunteering not captured in the original framework, potential extensions to the model are explained.

8.1 Collaborative Governance and Interpretative Thematic Analysis

8.1.1 Starting Conditions

Ansell and Gash (2008) identify starting conditions as the foundation that influences collaboration. The prehistory of cooperation or conflict, power and resource imbalances and incentives/constraints to participate can significantly influence the success of future collaborations. The findings revealed several factors that could shape sports volunteering collaborative governance arrangements within the region.

8.1.1.1 Prehistory of cooperation or conflict

Collaborative governance is shaped by the starting conditions under which collaboration begins such as power asymmetries, institutional history, and resource availability (Ansell and Gash (2008). In the context of sports volunteering in the GM City Region , these starting conditions are influenced by the broader UK governance and funding landscape. One strategic lead *(SL2)* was critical about the level of leadership from the government around sports volunteering, *'The leadership from government has been a bit hit and miss, to say the least. There's been a lack of leadership'.*

The governance of sport in the UK operates across multiple levels of governance (Ansell and Gash 2008; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000). At the national level, Sport England plays a central role in setting strategic priorities and distributing funding, while National Governing Bodies (NGBs) oversee specific sports (Houlihan and Green, 2009; Grix, 2009; Dowling, Edwards and Washington, 2014). One strategic lead *(SL6)* commented that money coming down via these channels had been reduced, *'there's not an enormous amount of money floating around… so you just…have to get on with it yourselves' (SL6).* There has been a pullback of monetary support for sport at participation levels and from school sport funding since 2010, due to austerity measures and a continued cost of living crisis (Berry and Manoli, 2018; Parnell *et al*., 2019).

Local authorities are responsible for much of the delivery infrastructure, including facilities, community programmes, and partnerships (Beacom, Ziakas and Trendafilova *et al*., 2023). However, this system is often characterised by top-down decision-making and short-term cyclical funding cycles, which can limit local autonomy and long-term planning. This was described as the *'shifting sands of policy'* by one strategic lead (SL4). With policy being fed downward through the sports sector into VSCs, using a top-down approach to governance creates a continuous cyclical approach to change (Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2021).

The framing of volunteering as a pathway to skills development and employability gained traction in UK policy, particularly under the New Labour government. Policy shifts such as New Labour's modernisation programme (Greater London Authority, 2007; Holdsworth and Quinn, 2012) ensured there had been a strong push of the skills agenda, which has meant that in some cases there has been a move away from altruistic reasons for volunteering, to reasons such as career orientation or personal growth (Bang and Chelladurai, 2003; 2009).

This skills-based agenda continues to influence how volunteering is structured and evaluated in Greater Manchester. As one volunteer (V1), noted, *"My skill set has definitely grown and [I have been] able to build my CV without having to commit to a job"* while a strategic lead reflected that volunteering *"enhances and brings to life their CVs… it can only help them flourish"* (SL1). These narratives align with broader policy and modernisation discourses (Shibli *et al.,* 1999; Bloyce and Smith, 2009; Adams, 2014) that position volunteering as a stepping stone to employment, particularly for young people and those from underrepresented backgrounds. This is echoed in the literature, Hayton and Blundell (2021) found that individual cultural capital is developed through gaining the skills and experience provided by volunteering which can then be transferable into other paid roles in the future.

Funding structures are a significant constraint. Many organisations rely on project-based grants, which are time-limited and often tied to specific outcomes. The legacy of austerity (Berry and Manoli, 2018; Parnell *et al*., 2019) has further reduced the capacity of local authorities and voluntary sector organisations to sustain core roles. One strategic lead noted that the volunteer lead role crucial for coordinating and supporting volunteers, was lost due to funding cuts (SL8). This shows how the impact of financial pressures, can affect the important relationships that collaborative governance depends on.

Policy shifts have also shaped the landscape. Over the past two decades, there has been a move away from sport for sport's sake towards using sport as a tool for achieving broader social outcomes, such as health, inclusion, and community development (Baines and Hardill, 2008). The recent discourse within policy strategy documents has been to move away from a focus purely on sport pathways towards wider definitions of physical activity and to encompass physical activity, health and wellbeing in the sport arena. This can be seen in recent policy documents such as *Sporting Future (*DCMS, 2023d). Within the GM City Region, the devolution of powers from central government has enabled more locally tailored approaches to wellbeing and physical activity, creating opportunities for more collaborative and integrated governance models. The *GM Moving in Action* 2021-2031 strategy states that progress is made when using 'GM's unique strengths as a City Region and work as one team on shared missions' (GMM, 2021, p. 4)

These structural and policy conditions create both constraints and opportunities. On one hand, they contribute to resource asymmetries and institutional instability. On the other, they

provide a framework within which innovative, locally driven collaborations such as Greater Manchester Moving and the Volunteering Community of Practice (COP) (Inoue *et al.*, 2023). can emerge. Greater Manchester's devolution deal has provided a structural foundation for more integrated and flexible governance. The governance structures within GM are long established and the region has history of solid working relationships since the development of AGMA in 1986 (Deas, 2014; Ward *et al*., 2015). This model of partnership working continued with devolution and Manchester is upheld as the superior model of devolution (Misener and Doherty, 2013; Hodson *et al*., 2020; Deas, Haughton and Ward, 2021). As one senior leader (SL5) explained, *"GM is probably in a better position than other areas of the country to lead on [Local Delivery Pilots]… more flexibility in the ways of working but also a lot of system leaders… as opposed to silo [working]."* Devolution has enabled a more place-based (Relph, 1985;Tonts and Atherley, 2010; Shilbury, O'Boyle and Ferkins, 2020), approach to collaboration, allowing Greater Manchester to experiment with governance models that are more inclusive of community voices and the VCSE sector (Inoue *et al*., 2023).

The evolution of collaborative governance and volunteering in Greater Manchester has also been shaped by a series of landmark events. One pivotal moment was the 2002 Commonwealth Games, which catalysed a regional shift in volunteering (Lorne *et al.,* 2020, p.318). As one strategic lead (SL8) noted, *"There was quite an intensification of investment into volunteering programmes… with the Commonwealth Games in 2002."* This event not only mobilised thousands of volunteers but also contributed to the regeneration of the area and embedded volunteering into the GM City Region's identity, laying the groundwork for future collaborative initiatives (Carlson and Taylor, 2003; Nichols and Ralston, 2011). A decade later, the London 2012 Olympics further elevated the national profile of volunteering. According to one volunteer lead (VL5), *"Volunteering became part of the national conscience as a result of London 2012."* This cultural shift helped normalise volunteering as a form of civic duty (Shand *et al*., 2023) and created a legacy of large-scale volunteer coordination that influenced local practices with the emergence of JoinIn as the London 2012 volunteering legacy charity, to raise the profile of volunteering (JoinIn, 2014)

One other external event that disrupted the landscape was the COVID-19 pandemic which created a significant gap in volunteer engagement (Manoli *et al*., 2022; Nichols, Reid and Findlay-King, 2023). The strategic leads felt that the gaps in sport provision had led to a *"lost*

generation of volunteers" (SL5) and a *"jilted generation"* (SL4). One volunteer lead noted, *"we've missed out on a group of either volunteers or committee members or athletes because of the pandemic"* (VL8). One of the volunteer leads *(VL9)* who works for an education institution where committees are changed every year discussed how they *'lost the historical passing over of traditions'.* This disruption has as yet unknown long-term implications for succession planning, institutional memory, and the rebuilding of trust and engagement post-pandemic (Power and Nedvestkaya, 2022).

8.1.1.2 Power-Resource Imbalances

The second key starting condition is the presence of power-resource imbalances between paid staff and volunteers. However, these condition often face challenges by inequalities such as access to resources, decision-making power, and the legitimacy of the institutions involved (Jessop and Nielson, 2003) .

Some volunteers described feelings of being undervalued despite their essential contributions for example one volunteer (V1) expressed frustration at the lack of recognition *'People almost look down on our role because you are a volunteer… instead of thinking this person gave up their free time…because they're passionate about it' (V1).* This quote highlights a perception that volunteers are not equal within the sector and could undermine the collaborative ethos. However, this perspective was not seen across all the volunteers. Another volunteer (V13) accepted the power dynamics between staff and volunteers stating, *'You do sort of expect [paid staff] to be a bit more informed…t's just that they're part of an organisation' (V13).* This would suggest a pragmatic acceptance by volunteers of the hierarchical structures, even within a collaborative setting.

Whilst strategic and volunteer leads were aware of this tensions between paid staff and volunteers The Lead for a Mega Event held in the region (VL7) described paid staff and volunteers as *'Team Workforce'* but confirming that *'the [volunteers] never get called workforce…they don't know that terminology. It's just an internal terminology'.* This reveals a boundary between paid and unpaid staff (Overgaard, 2018), reinforcing hierarchies despite efforts from organisations to promote unity with examples from the secondary documentation using various names for event volunteers. Volunteering theory helps understand this issue, volunteers are often motivated by altruism (Smith, 1981; Stebbins, 1996) and community connection (Bang and Ross,2009), a lack of recognition and inclusion

can damage their sense of belonging (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2021) and agency within governance structures. Paid staff usually have formal authority and professional expertise, positioning them as central to governance processes (McAllum, 2018). In contrast, volunteers while essential to the delivery of sport and being *'critical, absolutely critical' (VL1),* often lack the same influence, despite having intrinsic motivation, community allegiances and experiential knowledge. One council strategic lead (SL8) discussed how volunteers could support councils in such a way to go over and above their statutory responsibilities and therefore enhance the service that could be offered *'Volunteering for us is about the added value'.* Some studies found that volunteers should not be a substitution for paid staff but a complement or addition to them (Handy, Mook, and Quarter, 2008; Grix, 2009; Rimes *et al.*, 2023)

These power imbalances align with Ansell and Gash's (2008) recognition that asymmetries in resources and authority can undermine collaborative potential. The data suggests that successful collaborative governance in sports volunteering requires deliberate mechanisms to rebalance these power dynamics. Organisations that developed more strategic positioning and recognition systems demonstrated stronger collaborative relationships. For instance, EO1 and EO2 created distinctive designations for their volunteer groups, establishing these volunteers as skilled specialists rather than general helpers. This intentional framing elevated the volunteers' status within the organisational hierarchy and fostered more effective collaborative partnerships by addressing the inherent power disparities between paid staff and volunteer contributors.

8.1.1.3 Incentives/Constraints on participants

Participation in Greater Manchester's sports volunteering landscape can be dependent on motivations to volunteers and constraints or barriers the prevent volunteering at both the individual and organisational levels.

At the volunteer level, motivations span from altruistic to transactional altruism(Stebbins, 1996). One volunteer (V2) described an emotional connection to their sport: *"I've had so much out of this sport... you feel an obligation in some ways to try and give something back."* This reflects how important community can be to the volunteers and organisations Bang and Ross (2009) confirm that community involvement could be an important motivator to volunteer. Others are motivated by personal development and employability (Hayton and

Blundell, 2021) , as seen in V5's reflection: *"It's definitely helped me get my job… It made me feel more confident."* These motivations align with the career and enhancement functions, where volunteering can lead to skills acquisition and personal growth (Bang and Chelladurai (2003, 2009). Dean's (2016) research however found that reported motivations can be both 'instrumental *and* altruistic'.

However, these incentives are often impeded by constraints such as time and cost. Time was a recurring barrier to volunteering. One volunteer (V3) shared: *"I do miss some time with the family... I miss things like getting to watch football."* There is also an awareness of this constraint at the organisation level with one strategic lead level (SL1) emphasising that *"Volunteering is quite precious in terms of people's time, particularly on non-training or non-match days."*

Financial constraints are equally persistent, and organisations are aware of this, as one volunteer lead (VL3) explained, *"Volunteering isn't cheap and it's not free for anyone involved… the labour is free, but it still has the rest of the costs associated with it such as transport costs."* The same participant noted the challenge of training: *"We don't have much money to spend on training… if there is a train-the-trainer course, we can send two people… that training is basically banked."* These quotes highlight that volunteering is not cheap in cost or time and dependent on the level of the role, the costs for volunteers may be prohibitive (Handy and Mook, 2011).

At the organisational level, motivations are more strategic. Organisations aim to improve public health and community wellbeing through inclusive sport. As stated in a regional strategy (GMSO1): *"By improving the diversity of volunteers, more people from under-represented groups can benefit both from volunteering, and from having inclusive opportunities to be active."* Yet, these ambitions are also constrained by limited budgets, staff capacity, and the need to balance inclusivity with operational efficiency. One of the strategic leads (SL8) made clear that their '*statutory responsibilities should be met through employees, who you can guarantee are going to be there come rain or shine'.*

8.1.2 Institutional Design

The institutional design of sports volunteer engagement across Greater Manchester is marked by fragmentation and inconsistency (Rhodes *et al*., 2003; Euncher, 2003). As one volunteer observed, *"There's so many different volunteer recruiting sites in Manchester"* (V1), indicating the challenges of not having a unified recruitment system across the region. The landscape across the region has such variation in terms of size, shape and priorities (Harding, 2020; Marmot, 2021), with differences between boroughs in systems and practice. Each borough, organisation and club, has local autonomy to recruit and manage volunteers how best fits their needs. This adds to the complexity of trying to embed volunteering policy across the region. Jones *et al.* (2020) note that while structural process is important, it is the people at the centre of those partnerships who create the interactions and connections. As one strategic lead commented: *'You can replicate models of work, but you can't parachute in specific idea.' (SL7)*.

Sustaining volunteer engagement and retaining volunteers is an on-going challenge. One strategic lead (SL3) noted, *"The biggest challenge is to keep bringing in new blood,"* pointing to the cyclical nature of volunteer involvement and the need for institutional processes that support long-term retention (Peachy *et al*.,2013; Aisbett and Hoye 2015). However, there were comments from volunteer and strategic leads about the need to introduce some more flexible volunteer opportunities (Social Lens, 2021; DCMS, 2023d), one strategic lead *(SL2)* had a number of suggestions, *'The need to have more flexible volunteering…that meets the requirements of the volunteer. So microvolunteering, armchair activism…task-based volunteering where you are not necessarily signing up to an organisation per se, but you are signing up to help [with a specific task]'*

These issues underscore the importance of designing structures and systems that not only attract volunteers but also nurture their continued participation through training, development (Rehnborg *et al*., 2009) and recognition (Nichols and Ralston, 2012). Regional fragmentation can hinder the development of a shared regional strategy, limiting opportunities for collaboration and learning across organisations (Rhodes *et al.,* 2003). From a collaborative governance perspective, such fragmentation challenges reflect a decentralised institutional design with high local autonomy (Euncher, 2003). In response to these challenges, GMM has established a Volunteering Community of Practice which is a

cross-sector initiative designed to bring designed to bring together organisations, practitioners, and volunteers to share learning, align practices, and co-develop solutions (Inoue *et al*., 2023). This aligns with the principles of collaborative governance by fostering shared ownership, continuous dialogue, and mutual learning among stakeholders (Chadwick, 2022; McNaught, 2024).

Technology is often seen as a driving force for change and the UN World Volunteerism Report (2015) found that technology enables volunteer processes. One volunteer praised the quality control built into the VMS: *"The system is really good... [it] checks to make sure that the opportunities that go on there are already a relatively good standard"* (V5). Others highlighted the use of gamification (Schönböck *et al.* 2016) to engage and motivate volunteers: *"You can gamify, you can have the hours, you can compete..."* (SL2). These tools reflect a shift toward more data-driven, user-friendly systems that support both recruitment and retention. Finkelstein (2008) found that leaning into the competitive element of gamification could develop a sense of belonging and loyalty to the organisation.

In contrast to long-term volunteer retention challenges faced by those in VCSE's, some organisations benefit from a strong pool of event-based volunteers (Byren, 2006; Maclean and Hamm, 2007). As one strategic lead explained, *"If we've got an event on next week and need 300 volunteers… we put it on there, and volunteers come forward"* (SL8). This reflects a transactional model of volunteering, where engagement is short-term and task specific, but the volunteer receives something back (Ellis Paine, Hill and Rochester, 2010; D'Souza *et al.*, 2011). However, in the GM City-Region the same strategic lead also highlighted the presence of a deeply committed volunteer base: *"A lot of them were volunteers at the Commonwealth Games… we have a hardcore cohort of 200–300, who will volunteer for every event every time… they're here for 25 years, and they're not going anywhere."* This suggests that even within event-based models, there exists a core group of long-standing volunteers (Nichols and Ralston, 2012; Manchester Active, 2022)who bring continuity, institutional memory, and a strong sense of identity (Peachy *et al*. (2013); Brown, 2004).

From a collaborative governance perspective, this contrast presents both opportunities and challenges. While short-term volunteers can offer flexibility and relevant skills, long-term volunteers or *stalwarts* of volunteering, usually provide organisation clarity with detailed specific responsibilities; therefore, these roles usually require longer commitment, helping

to sustain trust and shared norms across events and organisations. (Nichols, 2005). This tension between short-term mobilisation and long-term engagement highlights the need for institutional designs that can accommodate both forms of participation while fostering continuity and inclusion. Institutional design must therefore accommodate multiple types of engagement offering accessible entry points for new volunteers while also recognising and supporting the contributions of long-term participants (Milora, 2020; Lachance and Parent, 2021; Harley, Yarker and Jones 2022).

Despite the challenges of recruitment and retention, many organisations have embedded structured approaches to training and role definition. One sport lead (SL9) described a clear commitment to volunteer development: *"We always committed to putting them on courses… safeguarding, DBS, first aid and [coaching] qualifications."* Similarly, formal documentation from a National Governing Body (NGB6) emphasised that *"staff and volunteers have clearly defined roles and responsibilities,"* reinforcing the importance of clarity and safeguarding in institutional design. These practices align with collaborative governance principles by fostering trust, competence, and legitimacy (Ansell and Gash, 2008). They also reflect best practices in volunteering infrastructure, where training and clear expectations are essential for both volunteer satisfaction and organisational effectiveness (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2021; Dempsey-Brench and Shantz,2022).

Volunteer leads and managers play an important but often under-recognised role in the institutional design of sport governance. This could be supporting other roles, as one volunteer lead (VL1) explained, *"I'm around to help the new Training Principal… to give advice,"* highlighting the relational and mentoring aspects of the role. Another volunteer (V6) described a layered structure: *"There was a Volunteer Manager, and then within that you'd have multiple coordinators working in different areas of the event."* These roles act as institutional advisers, translating between organisational goals and volunteer needs. Yet, their contributions are not always visible. As one strategic lead (SL3) noted, *"The volunteer manager is the person that holds that relationship… often unsighted or unappreciated."* These insights suggest that while volunteer leads are essential to the functioning of collaborative systems, their value is not always formally acknowledged within institutional frameworks (Dempsey-Brench and Shantz, 2022). Whilst recognising and supporting these roles is crucial for sustaining trust and relational infrastructure these positions are often precarious. One

strategic lead (SL8) noted that due to budget cuts '*we had to review our priorities… so, we withdrew from a full-time volunteer manager' this* demonstrates how institutional design is vulnerable to external pressures. This instability can disrupt continuity and weaken the relational foundations of collaborative governance but also form an opportunity for innovation. (Christensen *et al*., 2015).

8.1.3 Facilitative Leadership

Effective collaborative governance requires leadership that is facilitative in nature and can bridge organisational levels and maintain momentum. Facilitative Leaders provide support, resources and training to volunteers as well as fostering a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility (Ansell and Gash 2008).

Facilitative leadership in Greater Manchester is characterised by a systems leadership approach that goes beyond working in *'silos'* (SL2). One participant noted, *"GM probably is in a better position than other areas of the country to lead on [Local Delivery Pilots]… more flexibility in the ways of working but also a lot of system leaders"* (SL5). This reflects a shift from hierarchical leadership to a model where leaders act as connectors, enablers, and sense-makers which are core principles of both collaborative and systems leadership (GMM. 2024). The region's devolved powers further support this approach, allowing for more adaptive and locally responsive governance (Misener and Doherty, 2013; Hodson *et al*., 2020; Deas, Haughton and Ward, 2021; Ayres, 2022).

The complexity of working across multiple localities and stakeholder groups requires a facilitative leadership. As one strategic lead (SL3) explained, *"You're always working in a world where you've got a lot of different stakeholders…the success of a policy depends on your ability to align their motivations and priorities."* Another reflected on the tension between local autonomy and regional coherence: *"We have no such thing as 10 Local Pilots, we have one GM… So how do you then create that meta narrative… that encapsulates all the nuances?"* (SL5). There is clearly a balancing act that facilitative leaders need to perform to ensure that local identity is maintained whilst working towards the shared strategic vision of the GM City Region. Leadership in this context is often informal, relational, and distributed. One participant described the approach as *"taking the model and testing it in different spaces… allowing the energy to go where it goes"* (SL7). This reflection highlights the fluidity of leadership roles and the importance of trust (Bryson, Crosby and Stone, 2006; Ansell and

Gash, 2008; O'Boyle and Shilbury, 2016) and relationships over formal authority. One strategic lead supported local communities to shape their own approaches: *"It's up to the community… to agree to it, shape it themselves, and then we help them to do that"* (SL7). This aligns with collaborative governance principles of empowerment, co-production, and adaptive learning (Strokosch and Osborne, 2020; Osborne, Nasi and Powell, 2021).

Beyond the operational leadership, that is required in sports volunteering, facilitative leaders also play a key role in framing strategic narratives and building networks (Chaskin, 2001). A blog post from (GMSO1) described efforts to *"take a more collaborative, joined-up approach to volunteering… and determine what training, support, resources and funding is needed across the system."* This reflects a leadership style that is outward-facing, inclusive, and focused on long-term system change. Through platforms like the Volunteering Community of Practice (Inoue *et al*., 2023), leaders foster shared learning and collective action, reinforcing the relational infrastructure of collaborative governance.

Leaders also use data and measures strategically to guide decision-making and demonstrate impact as KPIS, audits and success measures have become the norm (Houlihan and Green, 2009). As one volunteer lead explained, *"Our KPIs look at how many providers are on [the VMS]… volunteers, opportunities, age group, people with disability…"* (VL5). Another participant reflected on the dual value of quantitative and qualitative data: *"I can't think of many things I'm involved with, where there's not a value in collecting that data… but also getting deeper with open-ended questions"* (SL1). This blend of metrics and stories supports both accountability and learning.

8.1.3 Collaborative Processes

The central element of Ansell and Gash's (2008) model lies in the collaborative process through elements such as how trust, commitment and shared understanding develop.

8.1.1.1 Trust Building

Trust is a vital element of collaboration in the GM City Region's sports volunteering network. Participants emphasised the importance of listening and recognition. One strategic lead reflected, *"The most important thing you have to do in these spaces [is] just listen and not talk"* (SL7), highlighting the value of listening in building trust. Volunteer Leads also described how symbolic gesture such as being recognised on social media reinforced the volunteers

sense of value: *"If you're posting about things that they are doing, they see that care, and that you're proud of what they do"* (VL8). Uniforms and visible roles further contributed to a sense of belonging: *"Having something for people to identify you with the club… really helps with helping you feel like you are part of the community"* (V10). These practices foster and reinforce the relational infrastructure that underpins collaborative governance (McNaught, 2024).

8.1.1.2 Commitment to Process

Despite the complexity of working across diverse projects and communities, many stakeholders demonstrated a strong commitment to the collaborative process. One strategic lead noted, *"You've got the complexity of… operating a variety of spaces. And each project will have its own defined outcomes"* (SL6), yet this did not deter engagement. Volunteers described long-standing involvement and deep integration into their organisations: *"I feel very much the sense of belonging... I'm ingrained in the foundation now"* (V10). Volunteer Leads also recognised the importance of making volunteers feel welcome and valued: *"You want them to feel welcome and ingrained... volunteers give up a huge amount of time"* (VL7). Forums and communities of practice further supported ongoing engagement: *"It's nice to go to another forum and have a chat with other people about what their challenges are... we are all into learning"* (SL1). These examples show that there is a sustained commitment to collaboration, even in the face of structural and logistical challenges.

8.1.1.3 Shared Understanding

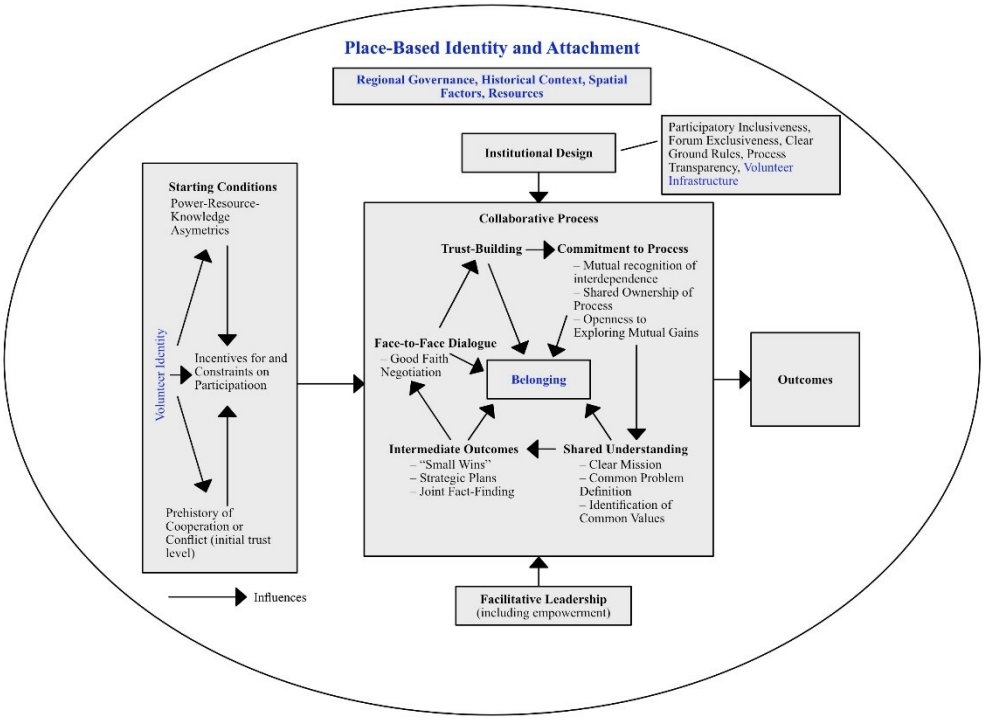
Developing shared understanding across sectors and localities was both a challenge and a goal for many participants. One strategic leader described the difficulty of aligning diverse perspectives: *"They are trying not to work in silos… but [it's] the very structure of sport… there is a lot of legacy that we are dealing with"* (SL2). Another reflected on the need to create a unifying narrative: *"We have no such thing as 10 Local Pilots, we have one GM… So how do you then create that meta narrative… that encapsulates all the nuances?"* (SL5). Despite these challenges, there was a clear effort to foster cross-sector dialogue and integration: *"Who's talking to each other that wasn't talking to each other two years ago?"* (SL7). Forums like one Volunteer Centre's peer support space were instrumental in this process, offering a platform to *"share ideas and resources… and seek support and*

advice" (CVS1). These efforts reflect a growing commitment to building shared language, goals, and values across the system.

8.2 Extension of the Ansell and Gash (2008) Model

The analysis of the GM City Region sports volunteering data reveals several dimensions of collaborative governance not fully captured in Ansell and Gash's (2008) original framework. The following discussion posits an extension of this model focused on collaborative governance and sports volunteering contexts. While their model provides valuable insights into collaborative processes, the volunteering context demonstrates additional elements that are essential for understanding and facilitating effective collaborative governance in volunteer-involving organizations. This section proposes four key extensions to enhance the model's applicability to volunteering contexts (See figure 16)

Figure 16 Extension of Ansell and Gash (2008) Collaborative Governance Model for a Sports Volunteering Landscape



8.2.1 Volunteer Identity as a Starting Condition

The data consistently demonstrated that volunteer identity and recognition of the volunteer roles, represents a critical starting condition not adequately addressed in the original model. Unlike other collaborative governance contexts where participants may be representing organisational interests, volunteers bring personal identities and could bring experiences from the workplace or multiple volunteering experience and therefore 'identity management strategies' should be included (Wegner, Jones and Jordan, 2019: p. 639) Whilst Ansell and Gash (2008) do include inclusiveness within institutional design, the integration of volunteer identity as a starting condition suggests that collaborative governance in volunteering contexts must begin with understanding and nurturing identity development rather than assuming participants arrive with fixed roles and interests.

8.2.2 Volunteer Infrastructure within Institutional Design

Traditional collaborative governance focuses on formalised governance structures and procedures (Ansell and Gash, 2008). However, the data that emerged from the findings found that volunteer-specific infrastructure such as including training systems, recognition and reward, communication networks, and support mechanisms can have varying levels of formality/informality (Adam and Deane, 2009; Overgaard, 2018) dependent on the size and shape of the voluntary organisation and need to be considered within the institutional design.

This finding suggests that effective institutional design in volunteer involving contexts requires attention to bring volunteer infrastructure alongside traditional governance structures (Cleveland, 1972). Organisations cannot simply overlay collaborative processes onto existing institutional arrangements without ensuring the underlying volunteer infrastructure can support meaningful engagement.

8.2.3 Belonging at the Centre of Collaborative Processes

While Ansell and Gash (2008) identify trust-building, commitment, and shared understanding as central collaborative processes, the volunteering findings revealed belonging as a core element that enables these other processes. Belonging emerged not as an outcome of collaboration but as a central element for meaningful collaborative engagement (Lee and Brudney, 2012; Bradford, Hills and Johnston, 2016). The positioning of belonging at the centre of collaborative processes reflects the relational nature of volunteer engagement, where participants must feel welcomed and valued as individuals before they can contribute

effectively to collective endeavours (Hallett, Gombert and Hurley, 2021). This extends beyond trust to encompass acceptance, inclusion, and validation of volunteer contributions.

8.2.4 Place as the Contextual Foundation

Perhaps most significantly, the data revealed place-based identity and attachment as a crucial contextual element surrounding and influencing all aspects of collaborative governance. The Greater Manchester history, context and stories shapes the collaborative relationships, opportunities, and outcomes (Haughton *et al.*, 2016). Place encompasses the geographical, cultural, historical, and social contexts that create the conditions within which collaborative governance occurs. This goes beyond Ansell and Gash's starting conditions to recognize place as an ongoing influence that continues to shape collaborative processes throughout their development.

8.2.5 Implications for Collaborative Governance Theory

It is important to emphasise that these implications are focused on the Ansell and Gash (2008) collaborative governance model in sports volunteering contexts. These extensions suggest that collaborative governance in volunteering contexts operates through more complex, messy relational frameworks (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000; Chaskin, 2001; Bianchi, Nasi and Rivenbark, 2021) than captured in the original Ansell and Gash (2008) model. The proposed enhancements: volunteer identity, volunteer infrastructure, belonging, and place, represent interconnected elements that enhance the conditions for collaborative engagement. The integration of these elements into collaborative governance frameworks could enhance both theoretical understanding and practical application across various contexts where individuals participate as volunteers or community members rather than organisational representatives.

8.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that collaborative governance provides a valuable framework for understanding sports volunteering in Greater Manchester, while also revealing the need for theoretical extensions to capture the full complexity of volunteer sector collaborative arrangements. The application of Ansell and Gash's (2008) model demonstrated how starting conditions, institutional design, leadership, and collaborative processes operate within the volunteering organisations inside the GM City Region, showing both the potential and challenges of collaborative approaches in this context.

The analysis revealed that traditional collaborative governance frameworks, while useful, require adaptation for volunteering contexts. The power-resource asymmetries between volunteers and paid staff create collaborative challenges that differ from typical inter-organisational governance scenarios. Similarly, the personal, identity driven nature of volunteer participation demands a different approach to gain commitment and shared understanding than those found in mandated collaborative arrangements. The GM City Region context demonstrated how regional collaborative cultures, and established networks can provide enabling conditions for collaborative governance.

Chapter Nine – Thesis Conclusions

9.0 Introduction to the conclusion chapter

This chapter presents the thesis conclusions through the Research Questions set out in Chapter One and establishes direction for future research. To evaluate the robustness of the findings in Chapter Six and Seven there is a full reflection on the limitations of the study before outlining the key contributions to knowledge. This chapter also includes recommendations for future research that would strengthen understanding of collaborative governance and sports volunteering through comparative analysis, extending the GM City Region findings to other Regions (city and rural) within the UK and internationally.

This thesis examined the *'unique'* space of sports volunteering in the GM City Region through the analytical framework of collaborative governance lens. The findings revealed how collaborative governance structures influence the sector and create challenges for organisational frameworks for those responsible for managing sports volunteering.

9.1 Thesis conclusions

9.1.1 Research Question One

How do collaborative governance principles such as 'starting conditions' influence the volunteer management practices of sports organisations within the Greater Manchester (GM) city region?

The narrative accounts within the case study of Greater Manchester provided in-depth insight into how starting conditions fundamentally shaped the evolution of volunteer management practices across the GM City Region sports volunteering organisations. The GM City Region is a large, combined authority with ten boroughs of differing sizes, shapes and priorities (Harding, 2020; Marmot, 2021) and the findings demonstrated that there was huge diversity of volunteer management across the boroughs. The Manchester model is an example of how varied yet inter-woven approaches to link back to the devolved structure within the region (Deas, Haughton and Ward, 2021). The strategic leads were acutely aware of the complexity of working across ten boroughs and the range of people and organisations working in the space. Different systems and processes are being used in each of the localities, some of the volunteers commented on the disparate and fragmented ways to find volunteering opportunities and having to use a variety of different recruiting sites or volunteer management systems dependent on where they wanted to volunteer. Despite some of the

challenges the strategic and volunteer leads commented on there was a clear alignment with the GM regional strategies and cross collaboration with many other organisations within the GM region. The Devo Manc deal (Ward *et al*., 2015; Kenealy 2016) resulted in additional powers for the region and additional budget for things like skills training and getting people back to work schemes (Beel *et al.,* 2018) which volunteering organisations do play a part. The findings show that a strong skills agenda has led to more transactional findings with volunteers using volunteering opportunities as part of their skills and career development to progress into work opportunities.

There have been substantial policy shifts which those involved with volunteering have had to adapt to. The business-like efficiency model of NPM (Hood, 1995) has meant that the volunteering organisations have had to adapt business-like systems and processes to address social policy needs. The top-down cyclical process of funding for many NGBs has meant that VSCs have had to adapt to changes to procedures and funding, this can be seen in the fragmented nature of recruitment into volunteering with varied pathways and systems to access opportunities (Milora, 2020).

The findings from the interviews demonstrated that there is still significant challenge in the terminology of volunteering (Overgaard. 2018). The slow recover post-pandemic to get volunteers back and the shift towards more informal volunteering was evident (NCVO, 2022, Heley, Yarker and Jones, 2022). The full effect of the pandemic and the '*lost generations of volunteers'* (SL5) would need further investigation but what did become clear throughout the interviews was the impact of technology on volunteer management and the speed of change in technology heighted by the pandemic. The gamification of volunteering with some generations was also evident as a motivator and way of rewarding volunteers.

9.1.2 Research Question Two

How have regional collaborative governance developments influence the institutional design of volunteer management in the GM city region?

The sector has faced a number of exogenous pressures or 'wicked problems' (Churchman, 1967) and the findings from the interviews demonstrated that there are a number of challenges for the voluntary sector to still tackle. Despite NPM having been superseded by

NPG (Osborne, 2006) and Collaborative Governance (Ansell and Gash, 2008), in practice the volunteer stakeholders are still having to embrace targets and measurements due to the cyclical nature of sport (Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2021). The move to collaborative governance has meant VCSEs can now be responsive to societal needs rather than purely on Olympic cycles, therefore the four-year cyclical process of funding may reduce as local delivery pilot funding is further tested and evaluated (Sport England, 2023).

9.1.3 Research Question Three

How do volunteer stakeholders interpret facilitative leadership and adapt to complexity and change in volunteer management and delivery in the GM city region?

The findings highlighted how collaborative processes are still a relatively new focus for the sports volunteering sector but with such a complex landscape and top-down public policy priorities to react to, there was an openness to working more collaboratively. Many of the participants commented on the 'fragmented' nature of sport (Elliott et al., 2022) and recognised that silo working was no longer sustainable given the complexity. One key development within GM was the success of the funding bid to be one of Sport England's Local Delivery Pilot which uses a whole system approach with a focus on how collaborative working can improve the health and wellbeing of communities in the region. This approach has required VCSE organisations, local communities and local leaders to find ways to work collaboratively building reciprocal relationships to serve their communities. Whilst this way of working links closer to the principles of NPG and collaborative governance there are also some principles of public service (Adams, 2014; Shand et al., 2023). Many of the strategic leads reflected on their ability to work collaboratively and share practice between the boroughs as part of the Test and Learn strategy of the Sport England project. The Active Partnership, GMM, have also been instrumental in providing facilitative leadership and embracing collaborative working practices as they transitioned from on the ground activity to a more strategic role within the region (Greater Manchester Moving, 2021). One other development that emerged is the creation of a volunteering COP bringing together representatives from across the region to improve collaboration, communication and to problem solve issues relating to volunteering from across the region (Inoue et al., 2023).

9.1.4 Research Question Four

How have volunteer stakeholders interpreted collaborative governance processes, outcomes and challenges in terms of delivery, such as managing, recruiting, rewarding and retaining volunteers within the GM city region?

Organisations adapted change by using HRM like procedures to recruit and manage volunteers leading to issues with the terminology such as using 'workforce' to describe volunteers and whether volunteers are there as a substitute or to complement paid staff (Handy, Mook, and Quarter, 2008; Rimes et al., 2023). The strategy currently being driven down from DCMS and Sport England is one of collaboration and partnership working and this is being implemented at a local level by the VCSE organisations facilitated by GMM (GMM, 2021).

Through the Sport England strategy, the local delivery pilot has enabled GM to try new ways of working through test and learn so this adds to the fragmentation within the region as there is a lot of varied activity happening a local level that is having impact on that user group but may not yet scale up (Sport England, 2023c). However, Harding (2020, p.29) notes that 'change is best driven by coalitions of the willing, not by grand designs. Many of the small steps taken towards the self-organization of Greater Manchester were made by a subset of interests, not as a result of wide-ranging consensus, but the gains they made improved the prospects for broader support later'. Given this potential for collaboration it is vital that collaborative governance practices inclusive design harnessing voices from all sectors, including critical voices from civil society. Moreover, given the potential for political and funding tensions between regional and national tiers of governance the presence of robust institutions and agencies remains vital (Jessop 2016; McNaught 2024).

GM's self-proclaimed difference and unique ways of working are certainly built in throughout the strategic documentation and evidenced in the work that is being done across the region, *'Greater Manchester is a significantly unique space' (VL15)* but whether GM is really that unique in comparison to other regions in the UK or whether that is the story they tell everyone would require further comparative studies. In a similar vein recent research examining devolved contexts emphasises the importance of further comparative analysis (Elliott *et al.*, 2022).

9.2 Limitations

While this research provides valuable insights into collaborative governance within the GM City-Region sports voluntary sector, several methodological limitations must be acknowledged that may affect the transferability and depth of findings. The purely qualitative methodology, while appropriate for exploring the experiences of sports volunteers in a collaborative governance context, limits the generalisability of findings beyond the specific GM City Region context. In a field dominated by quantitative and mixed-method studies (Groom and Taylor, 2014), the approach of this thesis provides rich contextual understanding but cannot establish broader patterns or statistical relationships that might exist across different collaborative governance models. The interpretivist stance, while enabling deep exploration of stakeholder experiences, inherently incorporates researcher interpretation that may be influenced by personal volunteering experience and preconceptions about volunteer management effectiveness (Crotty, 1998; Stake, 2006).

The decision to focus solely on the GM City Region as a single-embedded case study, while justified by the GM City Region's unique position as a 'test bed' for collaborative governance projects such as the Sport England Local Delivery Pilots significantly limits comparative analysis (GMCA, 2018). This approach prevented examination of how different regional governance structures might influence volunteer management outcomes, or whether the GM City Region's collaborative model represents best practice and is truly 'a unique space' or merely local adaptation. The absence of comparative cases means the research cannot determine whether identified collaborative governance features are indeed unique to the GM City Region's specific context or represent transferable principles applicable to other regions attempting similar governance reforms.

The extended thesis timeline, while providing longitudinal perspective on sectoral change, also means that earlier findings about collaborative governance structures may no longer reflect the current reality. The sports voluntary sector's accelerated evolution during and after the pandemic may have altered governance relationships and volunteer management approaches in ways that the research timeframe cannot fully capture. As noted in the thesis different eras of national governance also result in different ideological missions and policy prescriptions.

9.3 Contributions of the research

The contribution of this research is to draw together sports volunteering and collaborative governance in a single-embedded case study of a devolved City Region. Within this contribution the research provides a detailed empirical interpretive, thematic analysis.

The thesis advances collaborative governance theory by bridging previously separate literatures examining sports volunteering, collaborative governance in a city regional context (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Ward et al., 2015; Kenealy, 2016). This interdisciplinary linkage reveals how collaborative governance operates within sports voluntary sector contexts, extending beyond generic public administration models to examine sector specific dynamics. The research demonstrates how collaborative governance frameworks must accommodate the unique characteristics of sports volunteering, including cyclical funding patterns, diverse stakeholder motivations, and complex workforce definitions that blur traditional paid/unpaid boundaries.

Building on Shilbury et al.'s (2013) organisational-level governance focus, this research expands understanding to systemic-level collaborative governance, revealing how multiple organisations coordinate volunteer management across regional boundaries. This systemic perspective features collaborative governance challenges that are unseen when examining individual organizations in isolation, particularly regarding role clarity between governmental and non-governmental actors within complex delivery networks.

The thesis extends the Ansell and Gash (2008) collaborative governance model to better accommodate voluntary sector contexts. This extension adds four dimensions (See Figure XX) that were absent from the original framework: volunteer identity as a key starting condition, volunteer infrastructure within institutional design, belonging as central to the collaborative process itself, and place-based identity and attachment as an overarching influence on the entire model. These additions demonstrate how collaborative governance theory must be adapted to account for voluntary sector engagement, where individual identity, sense of belonging, and place attachment fundamentally shape collaborative relationships in ways not captured by traditional public administration frameworks.

The research identifies three key empirical themes that advance understanding of how collaborative governance shapes sports volunteering experiences: the volunteer experience

including the importance of identity and terminology, belonging and collaborative delivery mechanisms (Lee and Brudney, 2012; Bradford, Hills and Johnston, 2016). These themes provide a framework for understanding how regional governance structures influence volunteer recruitment, retention, and management practices.

A significant empirical contribution lies in demonstrating how long-standing relationships between sports volunteers and organisations provide stability within collaborative governance arrangements, even amid continuous policy shifts and cyclical funding challenges (Thompson, Bloyce and Mackintosh, 2021). This finding challenges assumptions about collaborative governance fragility and reveals how informal networks can sustain formal collaborative structures through periods of external instability.

The research contributes methodologically by demonstrating how single-embedded case study approaches can capture the complexity of collaborative governance in specialised sectors. The focus on the GM City Region as a "test bed" for collaborative governance projects provides a methodological model for examining innovative governance arrangements in their developmental stages, offering insights into how collaborative structures evolve and adapt over time.

The research provides crucial insights for policy makers and practitioners implementing collaborative governance approaches in voluntary sector contexts. The identification of terminology confusion around ‘workforce’ definitions highlights a fundamental challenge in collaborative governance where multiple stakeholders must coordinate despite different organisational vocabularies and conceptual frameworks (Ferkins *et al.*, 2005; Shilbury and Ferkins, 2011; Dowling, Edwards and Washington, 2014; DCMS, 2023b). This finding has immediate practical implications for improving collaborative governance effectiveness through establishing shared terminologies and understanding.

The research reveals how collaborative governance structures in Greater Manchester enable coordination of volunteers across ten boroughs while maintaining local autonomy providing a practical model for other city-regional contexts considering similar approaches. However, the findings also show fragmentation and persistent challenges around information sharing and resource pressures that appear inherent to collaborative governance arrangements, offering realistic expectations for policy makers (Rhodes *et al.*, 2003; Euncher, 2003).

9.4 Potential future research avenues and Final Conclusions

The conclusions to this thesis raised additional questions for further research into collaborative governance and sports volunteering. The findings from this study will supplement and support the understanding of sports volunteering collaborative governance within the GM City Region context. Further research is essential to contribute further to the understanding the voluntary sector's policy development and practice. In view of the findings, conclusions, and limitations, this chapter will conclude with suggestions for further research and some practical contributions.

Future research might interrogate comparative studies of sports volunteering and governance across differing devolved city-regional contexts, both within the Uk and internationally. For example, comparative analysis could examine how collaborative governance operates across UK City-Regions such as the West Midlands Combined Authority, North of Tyne Combined Authority or the Liverpool City Region, each with distinctive governance structures and sport policy approaches. Moreover, further research agendas could explore cross-national comparisons of these themes. Internationally comparative studies could explore how City Region governance influences sports volunteering across different national contexts, for example examining how Toronto's regional governance compares to the GM City Region. Such an international comparison would also obviously allow for contrast between different institutional governance structures. Collaborative governance theory could then be applied against such unitary and federal devolved systems.

Moreover, potential comparative case studies of urban and rural environments could examine sports volunteering and governance mechanisms. Rural contexts may present differently on the Ansell and Gash (2008) model and therefore a comparison could explore whether this has an impact on collaborative governance.

Further research could examine alternative volunteer management strategies in light of rapidly changing policy and technology, whilst having limited resources and increased expectations. Future research will also need to take into account new emerging eras of governance which may well have implications for the funding model and the role and size of the state. Such developments may impact on the volunteer workforce though this is likely to

remain a key aspect of sports volunteering and an important element of collaborative delivery.

Sports volunteering has a vital role in fostering community sports and events engagement, social cohesion and volunteer growth and development. Sports volunteers have been shown to play a vital role in collaborative delivery mechanisms across GM. This research contributes to both collaborative governance theory and sports volunteering practice by demonstrating how established governance frameworks can be adapted and extended to address the unique characteristics of sports volunteering. The integration of collaborative governance principles with sports volunteering offers a foundation for developing more effective, sustainable approaches to sports volunteering that benefit volunteers, organizations, and communities alike.

The thesis highlights the need for on-going funding at the regional and national levels with wider more sustained collaboration and for the public, private and third sectors in collaboration to continue to be agile in the face of on-going challenges and opportunities. Such adaptability is vital in driving sports volunteering's broader political structures of governance to shape on-going collaborative practices regionally and nationally. Whatever political and economic changes occur across the GM City Region and nationally in the future and indeed however complex collaborative delivery might become it is clear that sports volunteers have played a vital and unique role in a City Region globally renowned for its sporting prowess.

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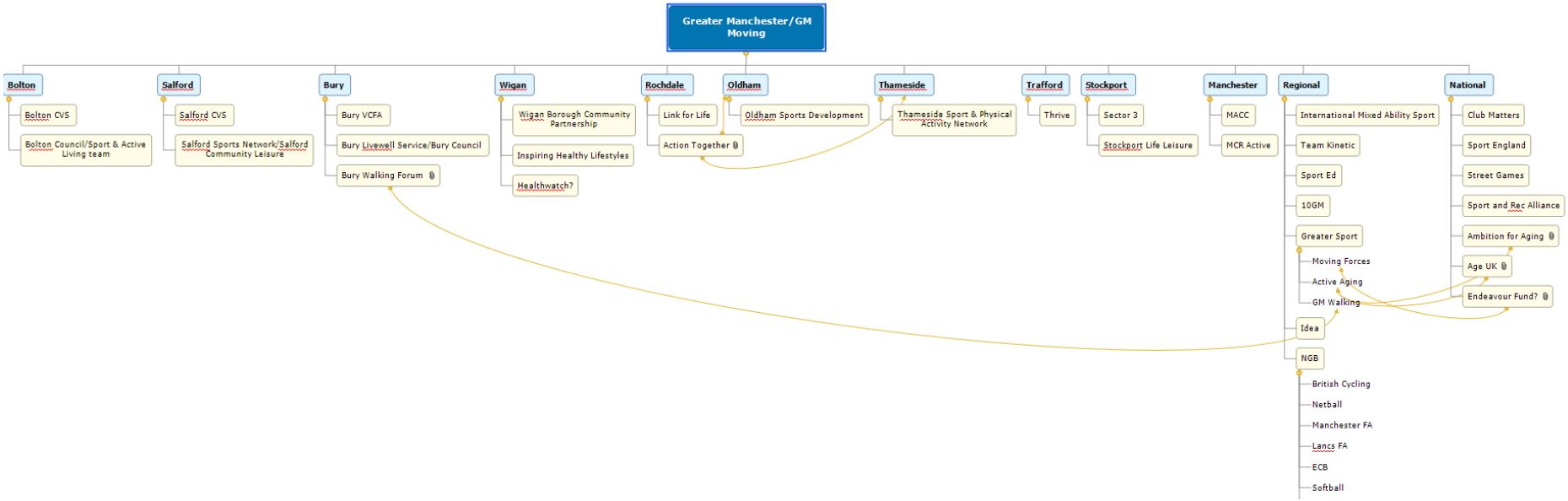
Appendix 1 – Mapping Attempt – Volunteer Organisations and Partners



Appendix 2 – Semi-Structured Research Guides

Volunteer Lead/Strategic Lead interview Plan

Suggested Questions	Additional Questions	Clarifying Questions
What is your job title/job role?	• Can you give me an overview of what your role entails?	• Can you expand a little on this? • Can you tell me anything else? • Can you give me some examples?
How did you start working with volunteers?	Could you go over your career history/volunteering history?	
How is the organisation/club organised and run?	All volunteers? Mix of volunteers/paid staff? How are you financed?	
What types of volunteer roles do you look after?		
How do you recruit your volunteers?	How do you get people involved? Do you use any technology to support this?	
Have you invested in any volunteer management software? Or are you using the VIP?	Why do you use this system? What did you used to use?	
How are the volunteers managed and supported?	Do you have a volunteer policy/training programme/qualifications volunteers can get? Do they need CRB checks – how is this managed?	
Do you reward the volunteers in any way? Expenses, certificates, events?	Do you do anything else to incentivise and support volunteers?	
How do you support volunteers to work with different groups of participants?	Do they do anything for disability, minority, gender, age specific groups? Why? How?	
What KPIs/impact measures are you measuring?	If not – why not?	
What support do you get from NGB/regional LA offices?/Active partnerships/local	Are there any issues relating to the governance structure? Does the governance of the LA make a difference? Do you have regular contact with anyone to support your volunteering? What do they offer? Is it useful?	

volunteering organisations?		
How much impact do National Policies (i.e., Change in Government or Sport England etc) have on how you work with volunteers?	What reporting structures do you need to feed into? Are there tools? Etc?	
What are the main challenges you face when dealing with volunteers?		
What are the main impacts volunteers have on your organisation?	Could be impacts on the sport or for the club/event/community?	
External Pressures? Tech use- changes? Funding/policy impacts? Covid 19 Impacts		

Volunteer interview Plan

Main Questions	Additional Questions	Clarifying Questions
Can you give me an overview of your volunteering experience?	How long have you been volunteering? Have you volunteered for different organisations/events/sports?	• Can you expand a little on this? • Can you tell me anything else? • Can you give me some examples? • How did you learn about these?
What types of roles have you had?	How have these roles changes over time?	
Why do you volunteer?	What is your motivation?	
How were you recruited into volunteering?	Interviews/job descriptions etc? Has this changed the more experience you have had with volunteering? Was any technology used as part of this process?	
Did you receive any training as part of your volunteer roles?		

Did you receive any qualifications/certifications as part of your volunteering role?		
What types of communication/contact do you/did you have from the organisation?	Personal – e-mails/text/technology – volunteer coordinator?	
How are you/the role you do is monitored/checked on?	Any technology used?	
Have you ever received any rewards for volunteering?	What types? Is a thank you a reward? Has this changed during the time you have been volunteering?	
Do you get any other feedback about your volunteering?		
What are the positive impacts from your involvement in volunteering?	If so, what are they?	
Are there any negative impacts to volunteering?	If so, what are they?	
Do you feel part of the community within the organisation?	Do you feel part of a wider volunteering community?	
Are there paid staff within the organisation you volunteer?	Are there differences between how you are treated?	
External pressures? Tech use- changes? Funding/policy impacts? Covid 19 Impacts		

Appendix 3 – Initial Themes

Initial Themes

Pathways	**Recruitment** **Retention** **Reward** **Motivations**
Policy Shifts	
External Impacts	**Technology** **Covid 19 Pandemic**
Collaboration	Relationship Building Belonging

Appendix 4 – Participation Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Working Title: The impact of UK modernisation policies and technological change on sports volunteers and organisations - A case study of Greater Manchester sports volunteers and organisations.

1. Invitation to research

I would like to invite you to take part in PhD research into the impact of modernisation and technology on sports volunteers and organisations. My name is Catherine Elliott, and I am a PhD candidate at Manchester Metropolitan University. The research study will use Greater Manchester as a case study and will use semi-structured interviews with volunteers, volunteer leads and decision makers who recruit or manage volunteers, from a range of sports and organisations.

2. Why have I been invited?

You have been chosen to be included in the study as you currently volunteer for a sports related organisation, work in a role that has responsibility for volunteering within a sports organisation in Greater Manchester or you work for a national organisation with some remit for volunteering in sport. I am looking to speak to volunteers, volunteer coordinators/leads or decision makers within sports organisations or who have a connection to sport.

3. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. We will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which we will give to you. We will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

4. What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to attend one virtual/on-line semi-structured interview through Teams/Zoom where I will ask questions to discuss your experiences of volunteering or volunteer management/organisation. These questions will include (but not limited to); *either* how you were recruited into volunteering, how you are managed/supported, any rewards or incentives you receive, how technology is used to support your role and any changes (for the better or worse) you have noticed during the period you have been volunteering. *Or*, how you recruit/retain and reward volunteers, how you manage/support volunteers, how technology is used to support your role and any changes you have noticed during the period you have been volunteering and how any national/regional policies and strategies have influenced/affected the strategies of the organisation. The interview will last for approximately one hour. The interview will be recorded so that I can transcribe the discussions to use for my analysis. I may also take notes as you speak for my records.

5. Are there any risks if I participate?

There are no risks to your participation.

6. Are there any advantages if I participate?

The information you provide during the interview will be used (anonymously) in discussions with sports volunteering organisations and may contribute to on-going work to improve the volunteer experience in Greater Manchester and with national organisations who have a remit for volunteering.

7. What will happen to the samples that I give?

All information you provide will be anonymised, transcribed and analysed. Statements that you made may be used as anonymous quotes using a pseudonym within the thesis or within any other academic publications.

8. What will happen with the data I provide?

When you agree to participate in this research, we will collect from you personally identifiable information.

The Manchester Metropolitan University ('the University') is the Data Controller in respect of this research and any personal data that you provide as a research participant.

The University is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and manages personal data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's Data Protection Policy.

We collect personal data as part of this research (such as name, telephone numbers or age). As a public authority acting in the public interest, we rely upon the 'public task' lawful basis. When we collect special category data (such as medical information or ethnicity) we rely upon the research and archiving purposes in the public interest lawful basis.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained.

We will not share your personal data collected in this form with any third parties.

If your data is shared this will be under the terms of a Research Collaboration Agreement which defines use and agrees confidentiality and information security provisions. It is the University's policy to only publish anonymised data unless you have given your explicit written consent to be identified in the research. **The University never sells personal data to third parties.**

We will only retain your personal data for as long as is necessary to achieve the research purpose. All data will be kept on a university laptop and password protected. Each participant will be given a pseudonym and only their (Area of GM/Sport) will be used with your permission.

For further information about use of your personal data and your data protection rights please see the University's Data Protection Pages (https://www2.mmu.ac.uk/data-protection/).

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be included in the PhD thesis. Academic articles may be published using the data and results from the thesis.

Who has reviewed this research project?

There is an internal group of three academic supervisors overseeing the study. The thesis will be examined by external and internal academics. If any academic papers are published the papers will be peer reviewed by two academics.

Who do I contact if I have concerns about this study or I wish to complain?

If you have any questions about the study, you can contact me as the primary researcher:

Catherine Elliott, MA, PGCE, BA (Hons) | Senior Lecturer |PhD Candidate
MMU Business School
Faculty of Business and Law
Department of Economics, Policy and International Business
Sport Policy Unit
Rm 4.09, All Saints Campus, Manchester, M15 6BH
E:mail c.elliott@mmu.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 247 3994
You can also contact the Director of Studies:

Dr Rory Shand, Head of Research Development, Future Economies University Research Centre Reader in Political Economy Postgraduate Research Lead Department of Economics, Policy and International Business

MMU Business School
Faculty of Business and Law
Department of Economics, Policy and International Business
Sport Policy Unit
Rm 4.17, All Saints Campus, Manchester, M15 6BH
E:mail r.shand@mmu.ac.uk
Tel: 0161 247 6463

If you have concerns/complaints about the project, please contact **Ian Ashman** - Faculty Head of Research Ethics and Governance via Email **i.ashman@mmu.ac.uk**

If you have any concerns regarding the personal data collected from you, our Data Protection Officer can be contacted using the legal@mmu.ac.uk e-mail address, by calling 0161 247 3331 or in writing to: Data Protection Officer, Legal Services, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH. You also have a right to lodge a complaint in respect of the processing of your personal data with the Information Commissioner's Office as the supervisory authority. Please see: https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/

THANK YOU FOR CONSIDERING PARTICIPATING IN THIS PROJECT

Appendix 5 – Screenshot of EthOS approval