



BRIGHTLIFE LEGACY REPORT

19. BRIGHTLIFE VOLUNTEER SURVEY

*Evaluation
Status Report*

University of Chester Evaluation Team

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PART 1 Background

1.1 Background

Volunteers are an essential part of the Brightlife project, from membership of the Brightlife Partnership board, to staffing socially prescribed activities, to assisting in research regarding project outcomes. To date, there has been no Brightlife-wide investigation into who volunteers are, how they discovered the Brightlife project, why they volunteered, and what actions they are involved in.

This report aims to explore some of these factors, by documenting the findings of an online survey relating to volunteers' experiences of involvement in Brightlife. It is the first report examining experiences of volunteers working across Brightlife and its service providers.

PART 2 Evaluation Methods

2.1 Method

An online survey was developed and distributed via the “Online Surveys” digital platform (formerly “Bristol Online Survey”). The method provided greater flexibility for respondents, allowing completion of the survey at a convenient time. The questionnaire was developed to build a picture of volunteers involved in Brightlife and the experience of volunteering as part of the project.

The questionnaire was based on interviews and an “Online Surveys” survey undertaken with the co-researchers and Older People’s Alliance (OPA) reported in Brightlife Reports 6 & 12, which focussed on the experiences of these volunteers in Brightlife. The initial questionnaire was piloted with the co-researchers and relevant changes / additions made. Survey questions were a mix of closed ended and free text questions, which enabled descriptive statistics of the data, alongside more in-depth findings where appropriate. The survey consisted of 22 questions (some with follow-up sub-questions), which were thematically divided into four sections:

- Contextual Personal details
- “About your Brightlife volunteer role”
- “Training for your Brightlife volunteer role”
- “Your experience as a Brightlife volunteer”

Each respondent was assigned a randomly generated response ID by the “Online Surveys” platform to maintain anonymity.

2.2 Respondents

Volunteers were sent an initial email inviting them to participate in the research with 24 volunteers providing information used within the report. Respondents have been coded BLV1 (Brightlife Volunteer) to BLV24 in order to attribute quotes, where included.

PART 3 Results

Twenty-four volunteers provided valid responses to the survey, encompassing a range of different organisations and volunteering roles. Twenty-three surveys were completed electronically, with one being submitted in paper format. The digital respondents took between two and 49 minutes to complete the survey, with the mean average time being 12 minutes.

Results will be divided into 3 main sections:

- Before Brightlife: Demographic Profiles of Volunteers, and Volunteering Backgrounds
- During Brightlife: The Brightlife Volunteer Role, Training Opportunities, and Why Brightlife: Enablers and Challenges
- After Brightlife: Expectations, and Future Intentions regarding volunteering

3.1 Before Brightlife

This Section focuses on volunteer demographics and background information.

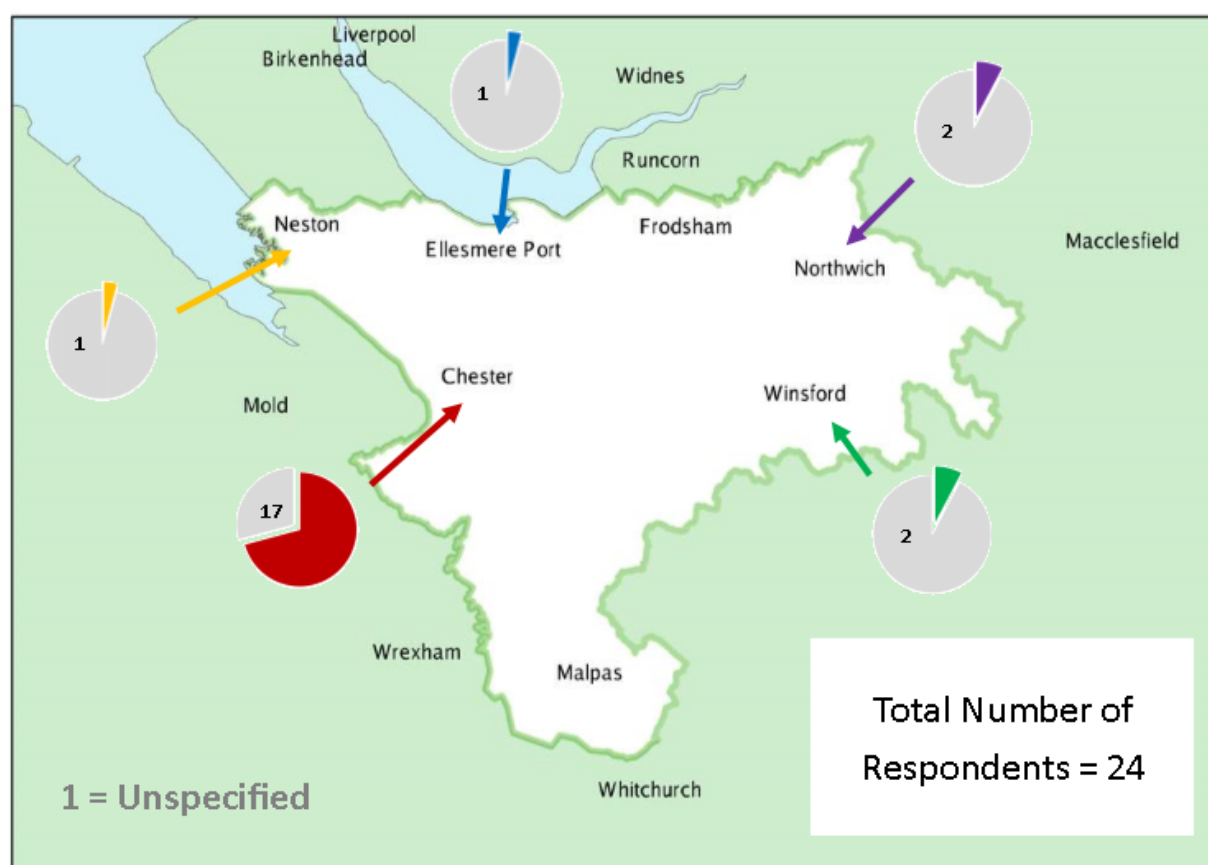
3.1.1 Demographic Profiles of Volunteers

Volunteers were asked to provide gender, age range and geographical locations (which city / town do they live closest to). To summarise, the majority of survey respondents were female (see table 1), and were based in the Chester area (see figure 1). Most respondents were within the 50 to 69-years-old age range (see figure 2). The number of volunteers in this age range group was over three times higher than the next most populous range (66.7%, compared with 20.8% in the 70 to 89-years-old age range). One respondent did not complete this section of the form (marked as 'unspecified' in figures).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Brightlife Volunteer survey respondents

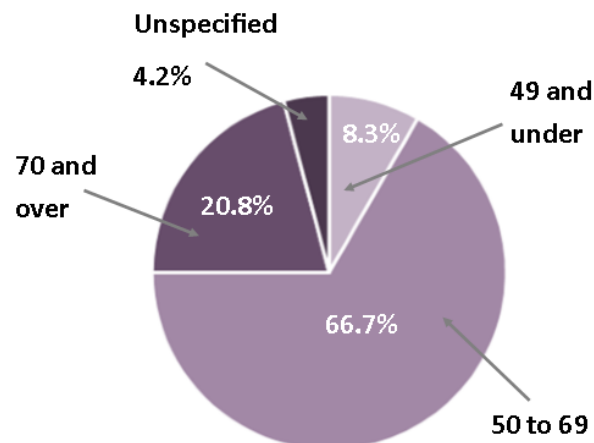
		No. of Respondents	As % of Total (n=24)
Gender	Male	7	29.2
	Female	16	66.7
	Unspecified	1	4.2
		24	100.0

Figure 1: Home locations of volunteer survey respondents



(map ©Cheshire West and Chester Council / Ordnance Survey)

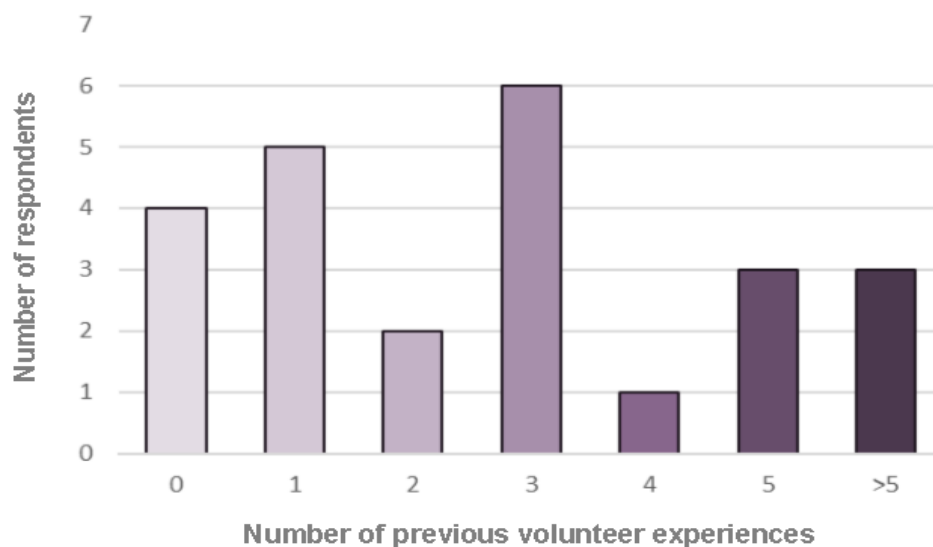
Figure 2: Volunteer survey respondents by age group



3.1.2 Volunteering Backgrounds

Survey results indicate the majority of respondents had volunteered for other groups before joining Brightlife, and those groups covered a range of themes and purposes. Of the survey respondents, twenty (83.3%) had previously held volunteer roles, while four (16.7%) had not. The number of previous voluntary roles ranged from 1 to more than 10; of the twenty who had prior experience, 85% had volunteered between 1 and 5 times previously. Figure 3 illustrates the number of other volunteering roles for the survey respondents.

Figure 3: Previous volunteering experiences of Brightlife Volunteer survey respondents



Of those who had volunteered before, respondents indicated experience of a wide array of voluntary organisations. These included cultural centres (e.g., theatres, libraries), heritage organisations (e.g., the National Trust), sports clubs, religious institutions, nature / animal charities, health / social care sectors and other community associations (e.g., the Women's Institute).

Results indicate the majority of Brightlife volunteers entered the project with some level of previous experience of the voluntary sector, and potentially brought a wide range of third sector working practice with them, however, this highlights potential issues regarding the engagement of 'new' volunteers. This finding is not unique to Brightlife (e.g., Choi & Chou 2010). Only two of the respondents were former Brightlife participants themselves before becoming volunteers (one male, and one female respondent, and one each from the Brightlife target age groups of 50 to 69, and 70 to 89 years old respectively); therefore, 91.7% of respondents were not Brightlife users before joining as volunteers, which could be an area of interest with regards to sustainability and legacy. As one of the aims of Brightlife is to involve over 50's in the design, delivery and evaluation of activities, volunteer recruitment and retention trends will be looked at in more detail in the Discussion section.

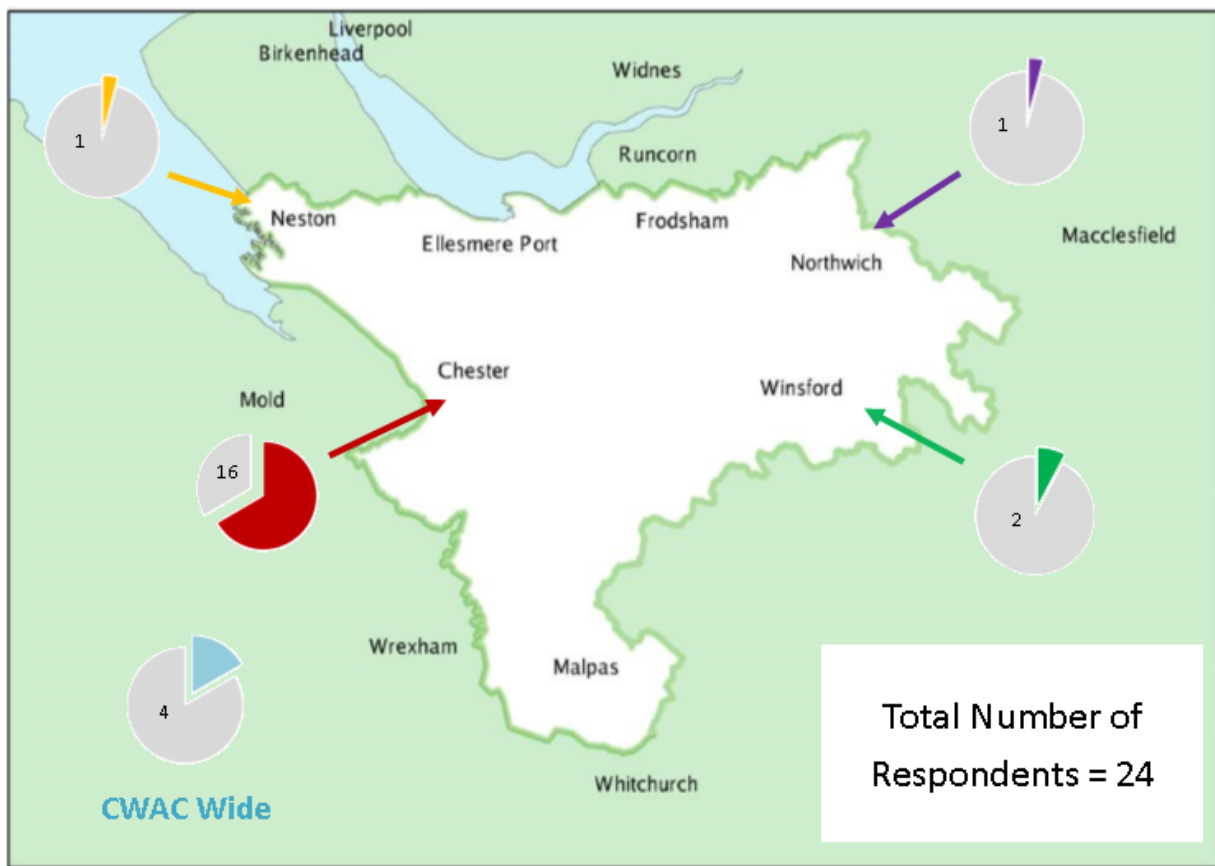
3.2 During Brightlife

This section explores volunteer's experiences and perceptions of the Brightlife volunteer role.

3.2.1 The Brightlife Volunteer Role

As can be seen in figure 4, two thirds of the respondents volunteered with projects located in or around Chester, with single respondents being based in each of Northwich, Winsford and Neston. Four respondents specified that they worked in projects which spanned the Cheshire West and Chester region. Over 70% of respondents volunteered in the same locality they identified as their home / base.

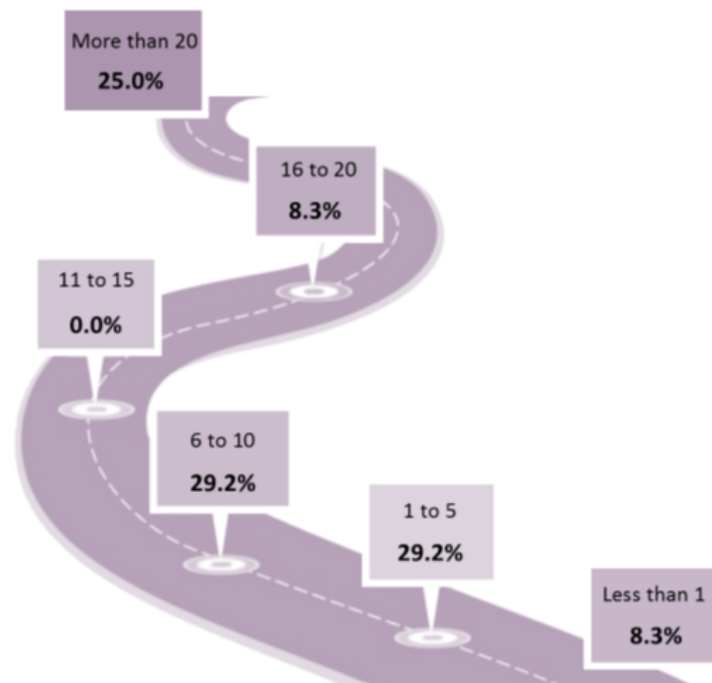
Figure 4: Volunteering locations of Brightlife Volunteer survey respondents



(map ©Cheshire West and Chester Council / Ordnance Survey)

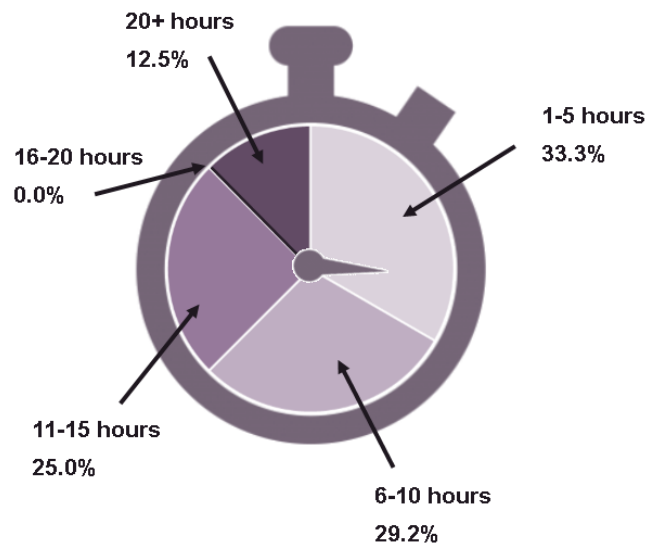
Average distance travelled by volunteers within a month was widely distributed, ranging from less than a mile to over twenty (see figure 5). Two thirds (66.7%) travelled an average of up to 10 miles each month, however some 25.0% travelled more than 20 miles monthly. Those travelling the greatest distances tended to correspond with those whose projects were not based near home, however, this was not always the case.

Figure 5: Average monthly distances travelled by Brightlife Volunteer survey respondents (in miles)



The average number of hours spent volunteering per month was also widely distributed, ranging from one to more than twenty (see figure 6). Just under two thirds of volunteers worked up to ten hours per month, while just over one third volunteered for more than ten. Most respondents volunteered for up to 20 hours per month (87.9%), but three volunteers reported completing over 20 hours monthly. There was no apparent connection between gender, age or location of project with either how far respondents travelled to volunteer, nor how often they volunteered each month. However, the two respondents under 49 years old both reported as volunteering for between 1-5 hours per month, perhaps reflective of other commitments (both reported volunteering with Brightlife was linked to formal study).

Figure 6: Average monthly hours worked by Brightlife Volunteer survey respondents



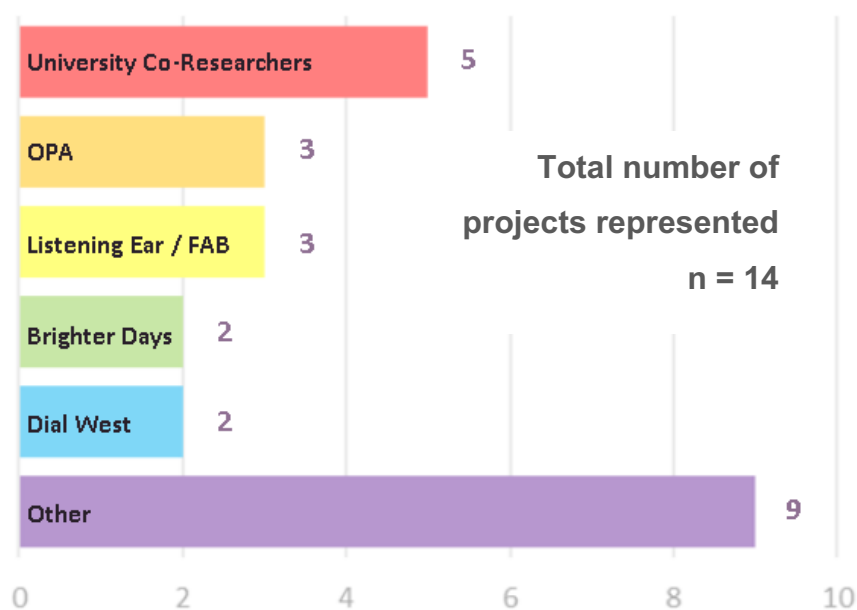
Brightlife volunteers learnt of the project through a number of methods, which can be summarised as follows:

- Pre-Involvement (already involved in the projects / partner organisations / service providers): **29.2%** of respondents
“Helped write the bid for Funding” (BLV19)
“Was a member of original steering group” (BLV15)
- Personal / word of mouth: **25.0%** of respondents
“Sat next to member of Brightlife staff at a meeting” (BLV21)
“Through a friend who was a member of the Partnership” (BLV1)
- Digital (Internet): **20.8%** of respondents
“Volunteer website” (BLV5)
“Internet search” (BLV20)
- Print media (Newsletters / Newspapers): **12.5%** of respondents
“An advert in the Chester Chronicle” (BLV6)
“Cheshire West and Chester newsletter” (BLV16)

- Other: **8.3%** of respondents
“A video recording in the doctors waiting room” (BLV4)
- Unspecified: **4.2%** (1 respondent)

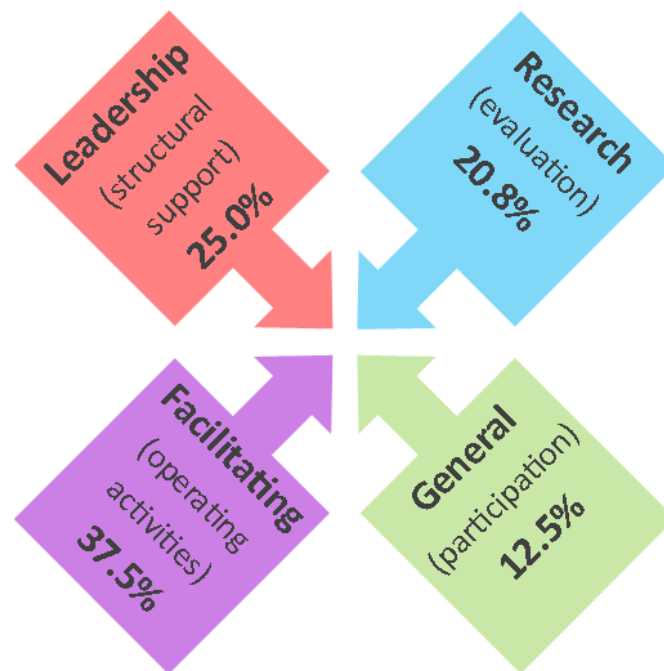
The organisations within Brightlife for which respondents volunteered are shown in Figure 7. The organisations which had multiple respondents in the survey are shown, while those marked ‘other’ had single respondents. Therefore, 14 individual projects were represented in the survey.

Figure 7: Brightlife Volunteer survey respondents categorised by group for which they volunteer



Within these projects, volunteers reported a number of different roles, which can be summarised into four categories (illustrated in figure 8).

Figure 8: Volunteer role categories within Brightlife, based on survey responses



Looking at each role category in more detail:

- **Leadership**, and related assistance:

Running groups and strategic administration, sitting on committees, e.g.,

“Influencing the strategic direction through membership of the Partnership” (BLV1)

“I tend to lead this project with another volunteer - we do everything to run the project” (BLV8)

- **Research:**

Researching on projects alongside University of Chester team, e.g.,

“interviews, write ups, literature reviews” (BLV5)

“summarising CMF comments, writing and publishing BOS and the follow up reports, leading a learning event” (BLV20)

- **Facilitating:**

The day-to-day running of projects and socially prescribed activities, e.g.,

“Run Quizzes, Arrange Plays / Musicians” (BLV24)

“Helping people to interact with other people in the group” (BLV4)

“talking to people who are lonely” (BLV11)

- **General:**

Unspecified / general role¹, e.g.,

“General volunteer” (BLV17)

“No particular role just a participant” (BLV23)

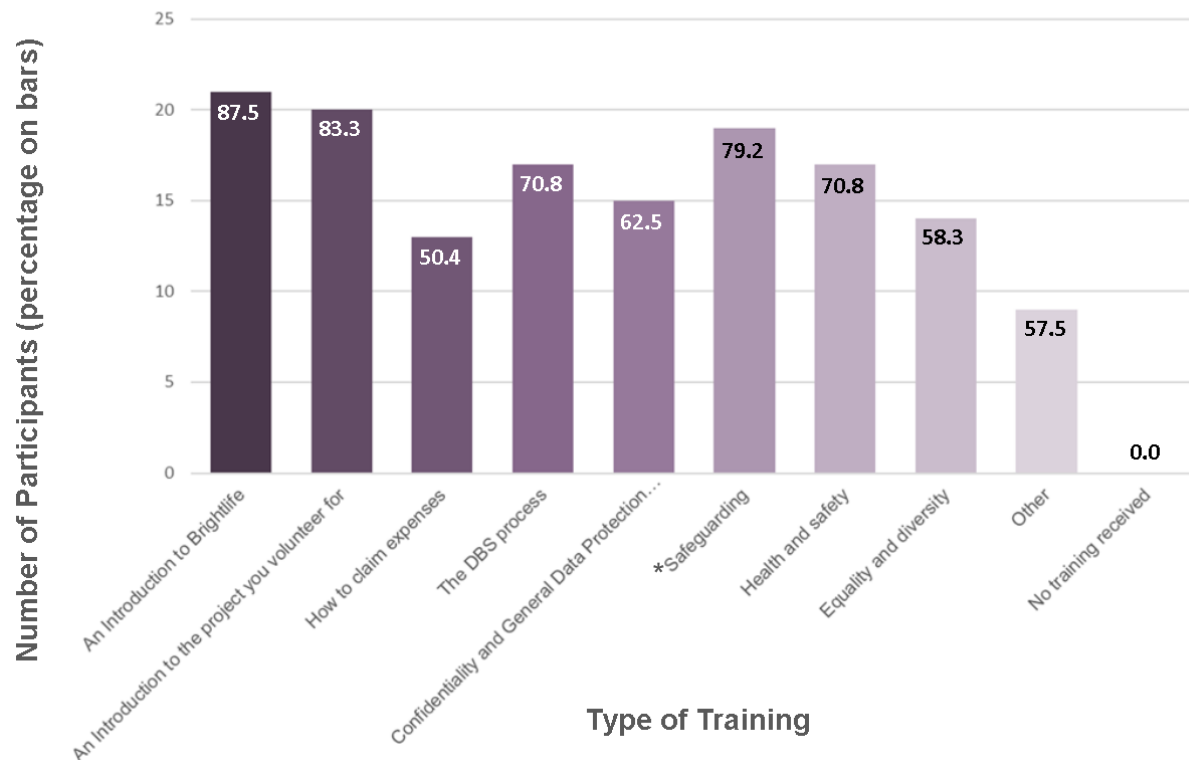
One respondent left this question blank.

3.2.2 Training Opportunities

Survey respondents were given a multiple-choice list of training topics, and asked to note which of the options they had received (there was no limit on the number of options each respondent could choose). Figure 9 shows the training topic options provided in the survey question list, along with how many respondents reported having received these different areas of training.

¹ Some Brightlife Service Providers refer to such volunteers as “Undercover Volunteers”.

Figure 9: Training received by Brightlife Volunteers



* One respondent indicated that they hadn't received safeguarding training, but that a support worker they worked with had, though they have not been included in the figures

As indicated in the graph, all respondents received some kind of training for the roles (no respondents chose the 'no training received' option). There were a wide variety of different training combinations (respondents completed a selection of available training opportunities). Most received some kind of introduction to Brightlife and the particular project. The range in number of distinct training topics covered per respondent was from 1 to 9 (9 being the maximum number of topics listed in the survey question), while the average of distinct topics within which training was received was 6. It is interesting (though perhaps not surprising) that the next most common training topics were safeguarding, health and safety, and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) process, particularly as various projects involved working with potentially vulnerable people.

With regards to 'other' training, eight respondents elaborated on the areas covered (with one noting the training received by their support worker), which reflected the four categories of volunteer role listed in the previous section (see figure 8), e.g.,

Leadership: *Commissioning* (BLV1 and BLV2)

Community Co-ordination (BLV19)

Research: *Library training and on-job training to use various software* (BLV6)

Facilitating: *Deafness Support* (BLV3)

First aid (BLV13)

Delivering Exercise sessions (BLV15)

General: *Food Hygiene Certificate* (BLV17)

When asked to identify any areas of further training which would be useful, 37.5% of respondents made suggestions. Two replies regarded a willingness and openness to learn any new appropriate skills when required, while the other seven identified specific areas, again largely linked to the specific type of volunteering:

Leadership: *Marketing Brightlife projects* (BLV10)

Research: *Further IT training as required* (BLV6)

university library (BLV14)

Equality and diversity. Constructing an online survey (BLV16)

A little more on the background and standards required in academic research (BLV20)

Facilitating: *First Aid. Resuscitation Procedures (BLV24)*

General: *Possibly for the more complicated machinery (BLV23)*

3.2.3 Why Brightlife? Enablers and Challenges

This section will look at the reasons survey respondents gave for joining Brightlife, what they enjoyed about the role, and what challenges they faced.

Respondents reported a variety of reasons for joining the Brightlife project. These reasons could be separated into six general themes (see figure 10), though these divisions were not distinct, with some participants reporting reasons which spanned across themes (hence percentages do not add up to 100%).

Figure 10: Reasons Brightlife Volunteer Survey Respondents gave for joining Brightlife



Exploring these areas in more detail:

- Desire to be involved in Brightlife specifically

“Interested in the project and it's aims” (BLV1)

“The particular role of co-researcher sounded unique and interesting”
(BLV6)

- Already in similar volunteering role / expansion of existing duties (prior volunteering)

“I was already working as a volunteer in the park, often with groups, and this seemed a natural progression” (BLV10)

“I was happy to put in more hours to ensure the sustainability of the group” (BLV13)

- To enhance studies in related topics

“I am a trainee counsellor and needed 100 hours placement to qualify”
(BLV7)

“Currently studying at college level 3 counselling and wanted to volunteer in an environment to use my listening skills” (BLV22)

- To learn new skills / try new activities

“It offered me the type of work that fitted my skill set combined with the opportunity to learn new skills and explore a new subject area” (BLV16)

“Something interesting and different from the normal volunteering of driving, making meals etc. and also to build new skills a little outside my comfort zone” (BLV20)

- Desire to contribute positively to the community / had pre-existing relevant skills to offer

“I wanted to make peoples life better” (BLV8)

“Give something back to the community” (BLV4)

“Felt I had the qualities & background for the role” (BLV24)

- Emotional enablers / life transitions (e.g., grief, loneliness, retirement, bereavement)

“I had recently retired, and was missing doing something meaningful with my time” (BLV14)

“Just lost my wife and was at a loose end with plenty of time on my hands” (BLV23)

One respondent left the question blank.

In terms of what they most enjoyed about Brightlife, the majority of respondents (91.7%) gave reasons linked to *people*, being the participants they were helping, or the other volunteers they were working alongside:

“Working with Brightlife team” (BLV2)

“Talking and joining in with our members. Finding great places to go and introducing them to new ideas and seeing them develop” (BLV8)

“Interacting with my fellow volunteers and the university staff” (BLV14)

“Bringing people together” (BLV9)

“Talking to the people who come and hearing their stories of their life and experiences” (BLV4)

Other reasons included:

- Being an advocate:
“Ensuring older peoples voices are heard” (BLV19)
- Being inspired / motivated:
“The intellectual stimulation” (BLV16)
- Feeling you are making a difference:
“Seeing the progress the participants make” (BLV13)
- General enjoyment:
“Having fun, sharing stories & being a good listener” (BLV24)

Considering challenges, one third of the survey respondents either left the question blank, or noted they did not have any challenges to report. Of the two thirds who did report challenges, they raised issues of time management, sporadic work, confidence and motivation issues, financial concerns, participant recruitment, potential interpersonal discord, and activity-specific issues, i.e.:

“Finding the time to ensure everything is done, as I also have other volunteer responsibilities” (BLV8)

“The sporadic nature of the work is understandable, but this means that there are periods when there is not enough to do” (BLV16)

“Expenses” (BLV7)

“Lack of numbers responding to the programme” (BLV22)

“Probably dealing with social interaction when it has the potential to go in the wrong direction” (BLV10)

“Learning to use machinery you are unaccustomed to” (BLV23)

Respondents highlight a range of enabling factors and challenges connected to Brightlife volunteering experiences. This feedback could be of use in developing future sustainability strategies regarding volunteering in projects linked to Brightlife.

3.4 After Brightlife

This section outlines participant reflection on their Brightlife experiences, and future volunteering intentions.

3.4.1 Expectations

91.7% of survey respondents reported Brightlife had met expectations. While one respondent omitted the question, two reported Brightlife volunteering experiences had not met expectations. It is interesting that when asked to elaborate why, both offered self-reflection on personal challenges, as opposed to any systemic or structural issues arising from Brightlife itself:

“It has shown me how difficult it is to start something from scratch and make it successful” (BLV22)

“Less work than I had expected” (BLV5)

3.4.2 Intentions

Of the twenty-four volunteers who responded to the survey, twenty-three (95.8%) respondents reported they would like to continue in Brightlife volunteering roles following the conclusion of the project, while the one respondent who did not want to continue in a Brightlife role reported that they already volunteer for a number of other groups.

In terms of future intentions, 45.8% and 41.7% respectively reported Brightlife had inspired them to volunteer elsewhere, or had made them consider possibly volunteering in the future – a combined 87.5%. Three out of the twenty-four respondents (12.5%) reported volunteering with Brightlife had not encouraged them to volunteer with another organisation (it should be noted that two were already volunteering elsewhere).

When asked to give any other feedback they wished, responses were uniformly positive from the ten volunteers who chose to answer this question. Aspects identified included enjoyment and interest in the volunteer role, feelings of fulfilment and self-reflection, and particular praise for the Brightlife team as a whole and the support they have offered.

“I began volunteering with this Brightlife Project in order to support it. I now find that I really look forward myself to the weekly sessions” (BLV13)

“It has been a thoroughly enriching experience and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity. I have also enjoyed meeting and “working” with my “colleagues”” (BLV19)

“Brightlife Staff are so encouraging and very professional with everyone” (BLV6)

PART 4 Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Discussion

4.1.1 Volunteer Identity

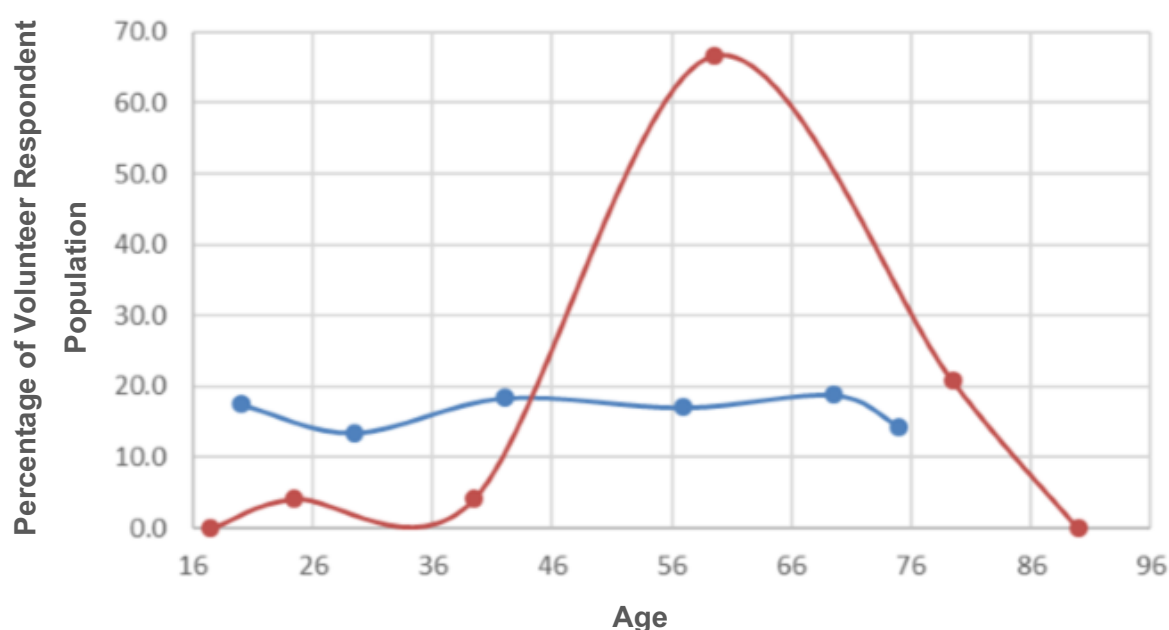
In terms of identity, judging by the results of this survey the 'average' volunteer is a woman, aged between 50 and 69, living and operating out of the Chester area; likely to volunteer for up to 15 hours per month, and to travel 1 to 10 miles; to have previous experience volunteering, without participating as a Brightlife service user before taking up the volunteer role.

Without overall volunteer demographic details, it is not possible to tell how representative of the Brightlife volunteer population this survey's sample was. Comparing this survey data briefly to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) 2019 UK Civil Society Almanac (data from 2017/18), we can see the figures are skewed in terms of both sex/gender and age. According to the NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac 2019, when it comes to volunteering at least once a month, the ratio of women to men volunteering is very close at approximately 1.1: 1, whereas the gender ratio in this survey was double, at approximately 2.3 women for every 1 man. An interesting aspect of the findings of this survey is that, in spite of the disparity in gender, there was no split amongst men and women along other indices; e.g., there was no apparent difference between male and female in terms of how often people volunteer, or how far they travel to volunteer per month. There was also a gender mix when it came to volunteer role categories as defined in section 3.3.1., i.e., gender did not determine likelihood to be involved in leadership, facilitating, research or general role categories. Perhaps this suggests a certain parity within the Brightlife volunteer population in terms of gender, however, with a small sample size, it is difficult to say for sure.

In terms of volunteer age-range, it is not possible to compare exactly as age-ranges in each dataset are different, but taking the mid-point of each group, the proportions of each data set by age group can be seen in figure 11. National figures had participant numbers in each of their recorded categories (hence results do not reach zero). The

national figures end prior to the Brightlife Volunteer figures as their final category is “75 and over”, while the Brightlife Survey’s final category is “90+” (an interesting aside in terms of how different organisations and survey designers divide and cluster age categories).

Figure 11: Graph comparing proportions of age ranges volunteering in Brightlife* with National figures collected by NCVO UK Civil Society Almanac 2019



*NB: one unspecified age respondent from Brightlife survey omitted from graph (see page 9)

It is evident the Brightlife volunteer age profile is skewed toward the 50-69 age group, which is one of the age groups the project is looking to assist. Yet, the majority of volunteers (83.3%) were not Brightlife participants before volunteering with the project. The act of volunteering itself *could* be considered as protection against social isolation, indicating one of Brightlife’s aims is being addressed via its volunteer programme². Volunteering post-retirement has been shown to have many positive benefits, such as improving cognitive health (Infurna, Okun & Grimm 2016, Chiao 2019), and resilience regarding traumatic life transitions, such as bereavement (Jang, Tang, Gonzales, Lee

² Interestingly, this has come up several times with volunteers anecdotally.

& Morrow-Howell 2018). However, causative factors for these positive mental health benefits are still not clear (Jenkinson et al 2013). Furthermore, the skewed age profile does raise other questions, including potential issues of community diversity; is an opportunity for community cohesion across age groups being overlooked? It was not an initial requirement that Brightlife volunteers must be over 50 years old (other than being part of the Older People's Alliance (OPA)). This is not to suggest Brightlife have been remiss in volunteer recruitment, rather just to indicate the mutual benefits of inter-generational interaction have been investigated by a number of researchers (e.g., Uhlenberg & De Jong Gierveld 2004), with volunteering in general suggested as a potential diversifier of social networks.

As to *why* the respondent age range is weighted toward the 50-69 age cohort, there could be a range of possible explanations. One of the most convincing links back to the means by which people discovered Brightlife and its volunteering opportunities. 54.2% of respondents learnt about the project through 'internal' means (pre-involvement in related projects, or by word of mouth), which could reflect biases linked to age-group homogeneity of peer groups. This could also have influenced the 20.8% of people who learnt of the project through the internet, if searches were tailored to volunteering linked to specific age groups (e.g., among top results for a quick internet search of "volunteering opportunities Cheshire 50 plus" is Brightlife³). Learning about the project through 'internal' means is not unique to Brightlife – the principal method by which volunteers on a national level found out about volunteering opportunities was "from someone else already involved in the group" (NCVO 2019).

Most respondents to the survey volunteered for up to 15 hours a month, and travelled up to 10 miles a month (though there were outliers). Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who volunteered away from their home base were more likely to travel further, but there was no connection between this and time spent volunteering. Indeed, there was generally no significant connection between time spent volunteering and distance travelled per month in general. This suggests volunteering pattern amongst survey respondents to be very individual / personal. There was generally no pattern between

³ Search conducted via "Google" search engine on 5/6/2019

the type of volunteering undertaken and how far people were travelling, with the exception of the fact that all of the people who volunteered Cheshire West and Chester wide were involved in leadership / leadership support roles with either Brightlife or the OPA.

Considering volunteering roles via the assigned categories of leadership, facilitating, research and 'general', respondents to this survey showed a relatively balanced mix, with between 3 and 9 people representing each role group. However, it is perhaps more likely people volunteering in leadership or research roles would respond to the request to fill out the survey. Due to this possible 'overrepresentation' of leadership and research category roles, 'facilitators' and those involved in 'general' volunteering may be comparatively underrepresented.

The majority of survey respondents indicated they had volunteered before. Previous volunteering experience as a spur or predictor of further volunteering has been identified in many other studies of post-retirement volunteering (e.g., Choi & Chou 2010). As highlighted earlier in the results section of this report, this weighting towards experienced volunteers can be viewed either positively or negatively. Advantages include the fact those coming to volunteer with Brightlife would already have experience of working in the voluntary sector, so might be better prepared for the nature of the work. Additionally, the range of former roles would suggest volunteers were bringing wide-ranging skills and experience to the Brightlife project. However, this prior experience, combined with the observation that so few volunteers were previous Brightlife participants, suggests there may be issues in recruiting first-time volunteers, which links back to both the initial aims of Brightlife, and the potential for sustainability. Recruiting the majority of volunteers through 'internal' methods (word of mouth, pre-involvement) versus 'external' ones (internet, print media, etc.) may also increase the number of volunteers likely to have previous involvement with similar programmes. Similar results regarding the recruitment of 'repeat' compared to 'first-time' volunteers have been found in national volunteer surveys, such as the "Time Well Spent" 2019 Survey (McGarvey, Jochum, Davies, Dobbs & Hornung 2019).

4.1.2 Stimuli and challenges of volunteering

The feedback from the survey respondents was predominantly positive regarding experiences with Brightlife; 91.7% stated experiences met expectations, while 87.5% stated Brightlife had inspired them to consider volunteering again (immediately or in the future). That said, as most volunteers (83.3%) already had volunteer experience before joining Brightlife, it is probable respondents to the survey were already relatively motivated and informed as regards volunteering in general.

When asked what was most enjoyable about volunteering, 91.7% of respondents gave reasons linked to 'people' (people they supported, people they worked with). This matches national data, e.g., of recent volunteers in 2017/18, reasons provided for volunteering included wanting to improve things / help people (42% of respondents), to address community needs (28%), and to meet new people / make friends (21%) (NCVO 2019).

In terms of motivations, there were a range of reasons why people chose to volunteer. 50% felt they had something positive to offer to the community (again matching the national data). There was some cross-over in terms of motivations between both volunteers and participants / users of Brightlife services; 25% of volunteers were looking for new skills / activities, which matches motivations for 50-65-year-old service users (Taylor, Mead, Olsen, Emmerson & Kingston 2017). Similarly, emotional drivers such as grief / loneliness linked to life transitions (e.g., retirement, bereavement) were service user motivations which also manifested in volunteers (20.8%).

Considering challenges affecting the ability of people to volunteer, one of the issues identified was finding enough time – a barrier mirrored in national figures (NCVO 2019). Lack of confidence was another limiting factor prevalent among both Brightlife participants and national datasets. It is interesting Brightlife volunteers identified one of the major challenges faced by the project as a whole; a factor also identified by both service providers (Olsen, Carr, Bailey, Mead, Taylor & Kingston 2017) and participants (The University of Chester Evaluation Team 2019) alike, namely the recruitment / referral of participants.

Other challenges referred to activity-specific issues, the sporadic nature of the work, and issues linked to the potential pitfalls of social interaction. The former connects back to suggestions for training topics; a potential solution could be ensuring training is tailored to fit specific volunteer roles. As regards the challenges posed by both sporadic nature of work and lack of time to volunteer, these problems could perhaps be alleviated by carefully addressing timings and volumes of work at the outset. At the beginning of the Brightlife project, it was to be expected that measures of workloads lacked clarity, however these have become clearer through the test and learn ethos of the project, and should perhaps form part of the 'legacy' of Brightlife, as they may aid in the efficiency and efficacy of future projects. Similarly, concerns over potential problems involving social interactions could be met by specific training, clarity, and a clear process and framework regarding both complaints and unacceptable behaviour.

4.1.3 Sustainability and Legacy

In terms of sustainability, it is very encouraging that 95.8% of respondents stated a wish to continue in current volunteer roles if possible. Further promising factors included the wide range of previous volunteering experience of respondents, suggesting a large skills base to utilise, potential networking opportunities with other successfully sustaining voluntary sector groups (especially locally organised ones), and contextual knowledge regarding best practice in terms of sustainability. The wide range of roles fulfilled by volunteers is also advantageous, with Brightlife volunteers having gained experience at different levels organisational levels, from commissioning to evaluation, and intervention creation to day-to-day running of sessions. Based on the results of this survey, each level is well represented by an experienced and able 'workforce' of volunteers. However, the difficulties associated with retaining volunteers are well documented (e.g., Mountain, Gossage-Worral, Cattan & Bowling 2017, Tang, Morrow-Howell & Choi 2010). Sellon (2014) proposes seven 'best practices' for engaging older adults in volunteering, by offering:

- Personal invitations to volunteer
- Role flexibility
- Stipends / Expenses
- Social Interaction opportunities

- Staff support
- Meaningful roles
- Recognition of contribution

Looking at these practises, it is of note Brightlife have already been identified by volunteer survey respondents as offering **social interaction opportunities**, **staff support** and **meaningful roles** (see volunteer quotes on pages 18 to 21), and ‘internal’ recruitment methods (pre-involvement / word of mouth) could be interpreted to represent **personal invitations**. The project also covers **expenses**; for many groups this was present in the commissioning bid budgeting. **Flexibility of roles** is reflected in different role categories identified in this report, alongside the breadth of individual groups taking part in the project. **Recognition of contributions** occurs in Brightlife, including highlighting individuals / groups on project webpages, offering a level of role ‘prestige’ (e.g., honorary university contracts for research volunteers), and in planning celebratory events. Although there are some negative aspects of ‘internal’ recruitment methods, there are also potential positives for sustainability, i.e., recruits with potential baseline level of background knowledge (with the ability to ‘hit the ground running’).

Having so few participants progressing into volunteering roles (8.3%, as based on the results of the survey) could be of concern for both sustainability and legacy, and may have various compounding factors. It is possible certain volunteers were not yet established in roles at the time of this survey, that some limiting factor stopped them filling in the survey, or perhaps mobility, motivational or medical issues of former participants are limiting transition into volunteer roles.

4.2. Conclusion

Results of this sample survey suggest Brightlife volunteers are experienced, enthusiastic, and have predominantly positive views of the project. There is weighting in volunteer numbers regarding gender and age, but amongst these groups there is apparent relative parity in terms of the exact roles people are undertaking. There is particular weighting toward the 50-69 age group, which could possibly be explained by the nature of the project itself, and the means by which people discovered it. The

apparent lack of people transitioning from participant to volunteer is of note, and could result from a number of factors. The key limitation of this survey is its scale, with only 24 viable responses (which will of course impact on the rigour of inferences). Still, the motivating factors and challenges illuminated by this study should be taken into account when considering volunteer recruitment and retention in future, as they will influence the legacy and sustainability of Brightlife.

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