

## Building London's sporting workforce of the future

Tomorrow, the second annual London Sport Awards will celebrate the best of grassroots physical activity and sport in London. Of the eight Award categories, almost half focus specifically on coaches, volunteers and the wider sporting workforce. The message is clear: without great people supporting and delivering it, the things that make grassroots sport so powerful simply couldn't happen.

But while there are great coaches and volunteers, and great support for developing the 'frontline' workforce of sport, there is a question for us to confront: how good are our current coaches, volunteers and deliverers at working with those people who aren't currently taking part in sport? Anecdotally, there's a lot of suggestion that a significant proportion of coaches and volunteers across all sports get into it having been participants themselves. That makes a lot of sense, and it's great to support people to have a stronger, deeper relationship with their sport. But how does it connect to those people that look at a sport and instinctively think 'No. Not for me'?

London is one of the world's most diverse places. At the last census, 13 different primary languages were spoken by 50,000 people in the capital; 6 different religions (excluding those who identified as having no primary religion) were practiced by over 70,000 people; 3.29m people identified as being part of a BAME group. Within this rich tapestry of people, there are wildly varying socio-economic strata, an incredible range of socio-cultural expectations and a staggering range of permutations that leave us with an incredible divergence in attitudes and behaviours around physical activity and sport. When we consider this against what we already know about the importance of coaching and volunteering in getting people active, it presents a real, fundamental challenge for raising levels of activity across London's populations.

That's why one of London Sport's commitments isn't simply to grow the workforce of sport, but to create a Bigger and Better Workforce to deliver physical activity and sport in the capital. Of course, bringing more people into coaching and volunteering is important – but supporting the development of the right people to work with London's different populations is the key. As of today, we have a pretty good understanding of who an inactive Londoner is likely to be – now we need to identify the characteristics that would be most likely to turn them from someone not currently participating into someone who finds a route into physical activity and sport. There are also wider considerations at play here – the lack of diversity across sport's workforce is an issue in and of itself, and while there are steps being taken to address this in sport's executive leadership, it's vital that coaching, volunteering and the wider 'frontline' workforce are also supported to develop a more diverse and representative makeup.

In the coming months, London Sport will be working on a major project to research, explore and identify what a future workforce for London needs to look like, and how we – and other partners throughout the whole sport sector – can support their growth and development. Nor is this only about helping raise participation. As government, Sport England and many others have identified, there are real personal and cultural benefits to volunteering and coaching in sport and these dual-benefits are important outcomes in their own right.

This isn't a small task, but it's a vital one if we are going to be successful in getting 1,000,000 Londoners more physically active by 2020. We'll never stop celebrating and supporting the great people that already get involved as coaches and volunteers, every single day, throughout London. It's just that now we have to look at where we go from here: a bigger and better workforce for sport in London.

- Dean Nevill, Specialist Advisor – Workforce, London Sport  
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