



WEA 'Pound Plus' Report - Volunteering

Workers' Educational Association

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Aims of the Report

This report seeks to quantify the additional income and savings that the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) generates in an academic year over and above the direct funding from the Government via the Adult Skills and Community Learning Budgets. This term 'Pound Plus' is used to describe this additional income and savings.

The research was conducted jointly by the WEA and RCU Ltd. in February and March 2013 and involved data analysis and online and telephone surveys with volunteers.

RCU is a specialist educational market research company working with clients all over the UK.

RCU provides customised market research, consultancy, publications and seminars for a wide range of public and private sector clients and has been serving the learning and skills sector since 1987. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills helped fund this research in order to provide further examples of Pound Plus for the Community Learning sector.

WEA Pound Plus Summary Report and WEA Partnership Pound Plus Report are also available upon request. Please contact Iram Naz on inaz@wea.org.uk for further information.

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1 Volunteering

1.1 Introduction

The WEA estimates that it has 2,800 active volunteers. They support its work by serving as Trustees, or as regional or local Committee Members, or by running Branch activities or Local Associations. Volunteers are drawn primarily from the WEA's membership and play a crucial part in achieving its objectives. Some of the volunteers use their professional expertise, whilst others give their time and energy in work that is not related to their everyday jobs. Many volunteers are retired or not in paid employment. The WEA Trustees Annual Report and Financial Statements notes:

“Volunteers play key roles in organising local courses where no other provision exists and many courses would not be viable without their inputs. The significant contribution of volunteers to the work of the WEA has always been identified as a strength both internally and in external assessments such as Ofsted visits. The WEA values the skills, enthusiasm and many hours of time given by volunteers as they directly support a significant part of the WEA's national, regional, branch and local operations and activities”.

The contribution of volunteers has not, until now, been quantified. The information on volunteering roles and the time spent volunteering has previously not been documented and therefore calculating the monetary value of their contribution has been impossible. The Pound Plus project provided an opportunity to investigate the value of volunteering both to the WEA and to the wider community.

1.2 Methodology

In February 2013, an online survey for WEA volunteers was set up using Survey Monkey. The questions focused on how many hours of work WEA volunteers were doing per month and what roles they had. The survey also included qualitative questions asking for detail on what each role entailed and the impact of volunteering on each individual and the community.

The survey was sent to 1,066 volunteers (volunteers with active email addresses) from the 1,643 volunteers who were on the WEA database at the time of the research. Volunteers were given a two week window to respond, with a reminder to help generate a better response rate.

An online survey method was chosen as it is low cost and it allows real time access, making analysis easier. It is also more convenient for respondents in that they can answer questions in their own time and start, stop and return later. This was highly critical for volunteers who would need time to think and calculate their hours carefully. Online surveys also offer confidentiality and design flexibility where complex routing can be employed and errors in survey recording and transcription are reduced. Although online surveys can attain high response rates, Internet users are constantly bombarded by messages and can easily delete or ignore invitations to participate. To reduce this as much as

possible, the survey was linked to a covering email which provided assurance of confidentiality and alliance to the WEA. This also stressed the value of the volunteers' feedback to the research.

1.3 Survey Response

There were 346 responses in total, which is a 32 percent response rate. A comparison was made between the profile of the respondents and the known profile of WEA volunteers, and in terms of age, gender and geographical region respondents appeared to be broadly representative of the overall population. Figures, 1, 2 and 3 show the breakdown of survey respondents by gender, age and ethnicity. In common with the WEA's overall volunteer population, survey respondents were predominantly female (64 percent), over 65 years of age (64 percent) and White-British (89 percent). Figure 4 shows that the highest number of survey responses came from the Eastern Region (35 percent) and the Southern Region (22 percent). The vast majority of volunteers (74 percent) were retired with only 3 percent working full time (Figure 5).

The survey was followed up with nine detailed telephone interviews with volunteers who fell into the most common volunteering roles. The was to check the survey responses and to obtain additional information about volunteering activities

The research findings were used to build profiles of the various volunteer roles and the hours spent in those roles so that a monetary Pound Plus value could be attached to them.

Figure 1: Gender of Survey Respondents

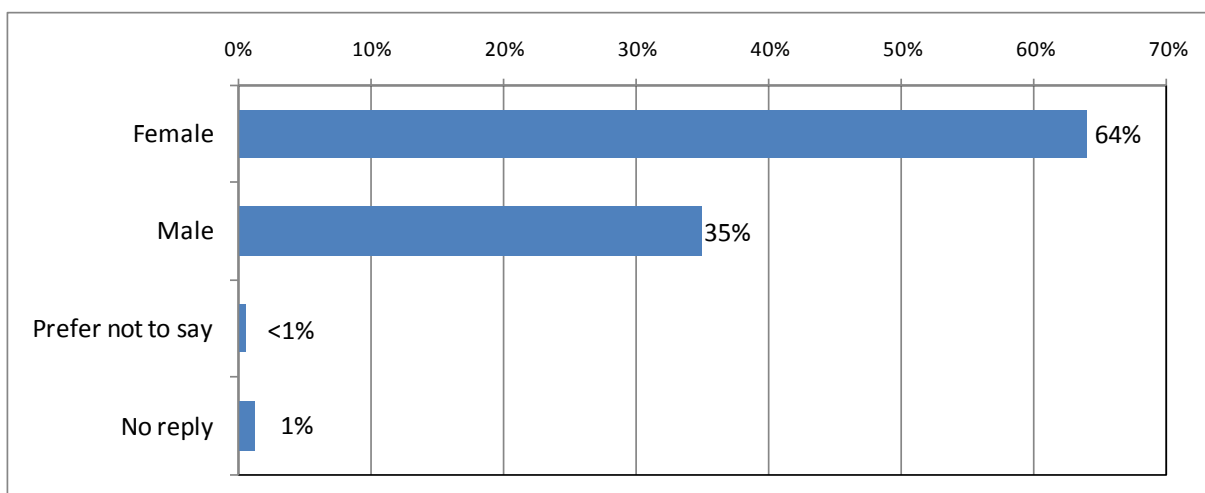


Figure 2: Age of Survey Respondents

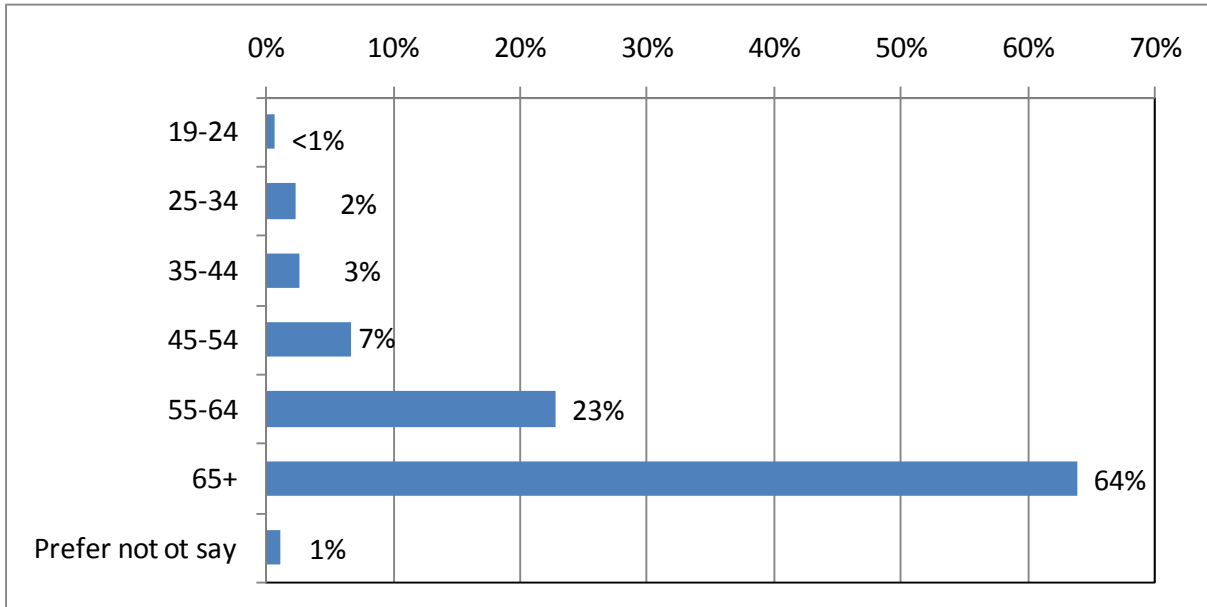


Figure 3: Ethnic Background of Respondents

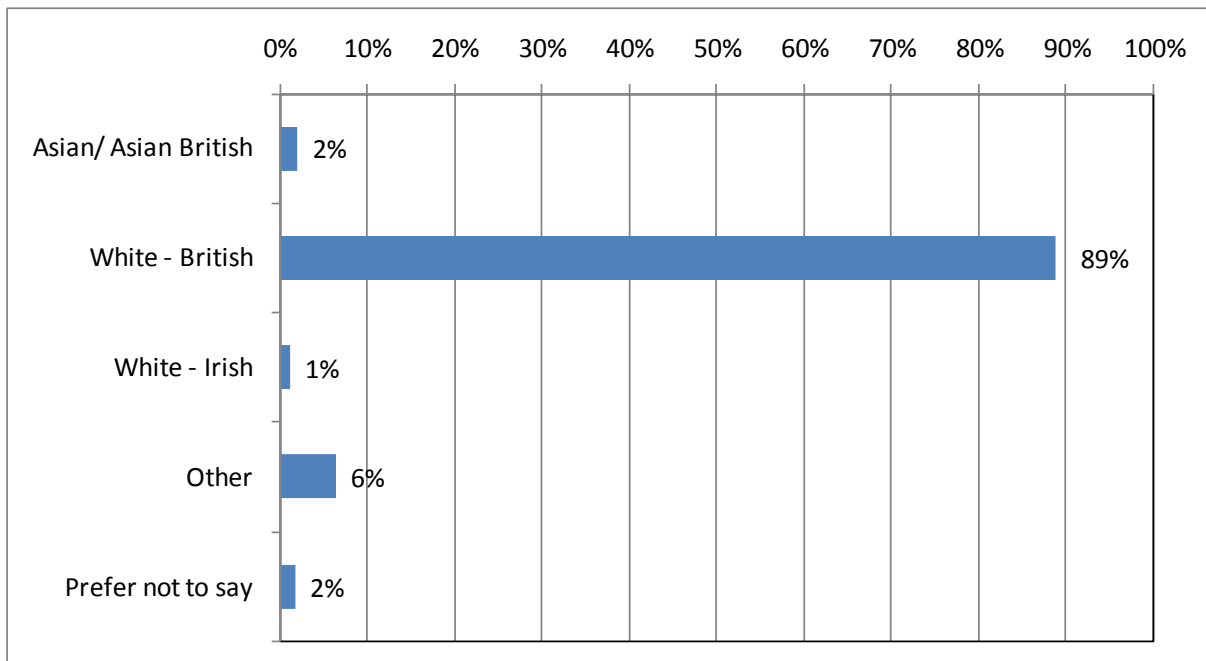


Figure 4: Geographical Region of Respondents

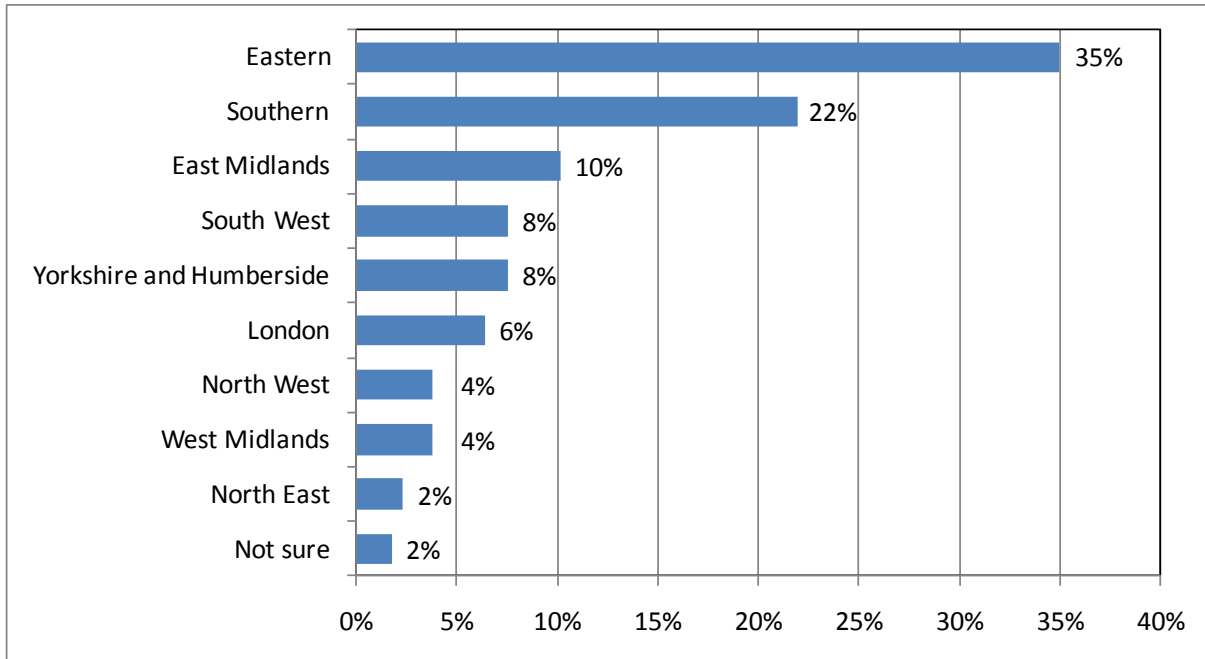
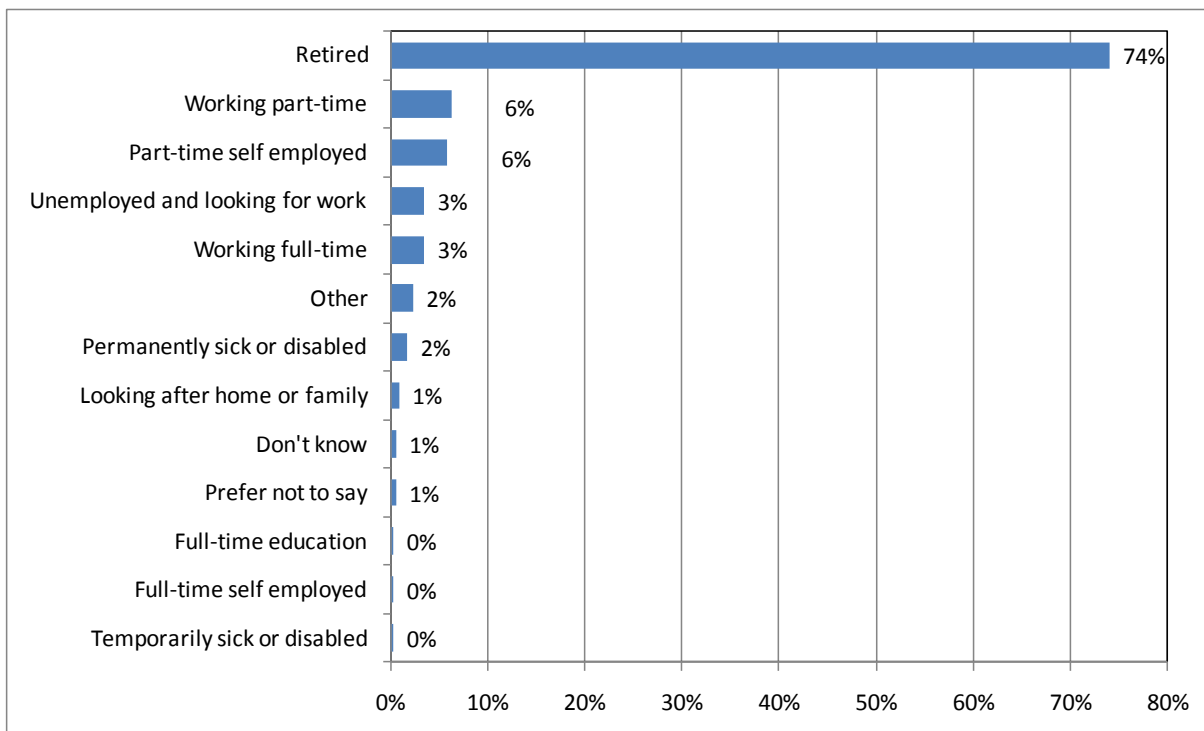


Figure 5: Current Work Status of Respondents



1.4 Survey Findings

Figure 6 shows the roles WEA volunteers said they were undertaking (respondents were able to select more than one role). The survey confirmed that most of the WEA volunteers (74 percent of respondents) have multiple roles, whilst the interviews suggested there is often significant overlap between them. About half of the respondents acted as Branch Officers and/or Branch Committee Members, providing essential support for the WEA's organisation and operation. A significant number had specific functions related to learner recruitment or learning delivery such as publicity/marketing (14 percent), learning/teaching support (11 percent), project/outreach worker (2 percent) and learning champion (1 percent).

Figure 6: Volunteer Roles Undertaken by Respondents

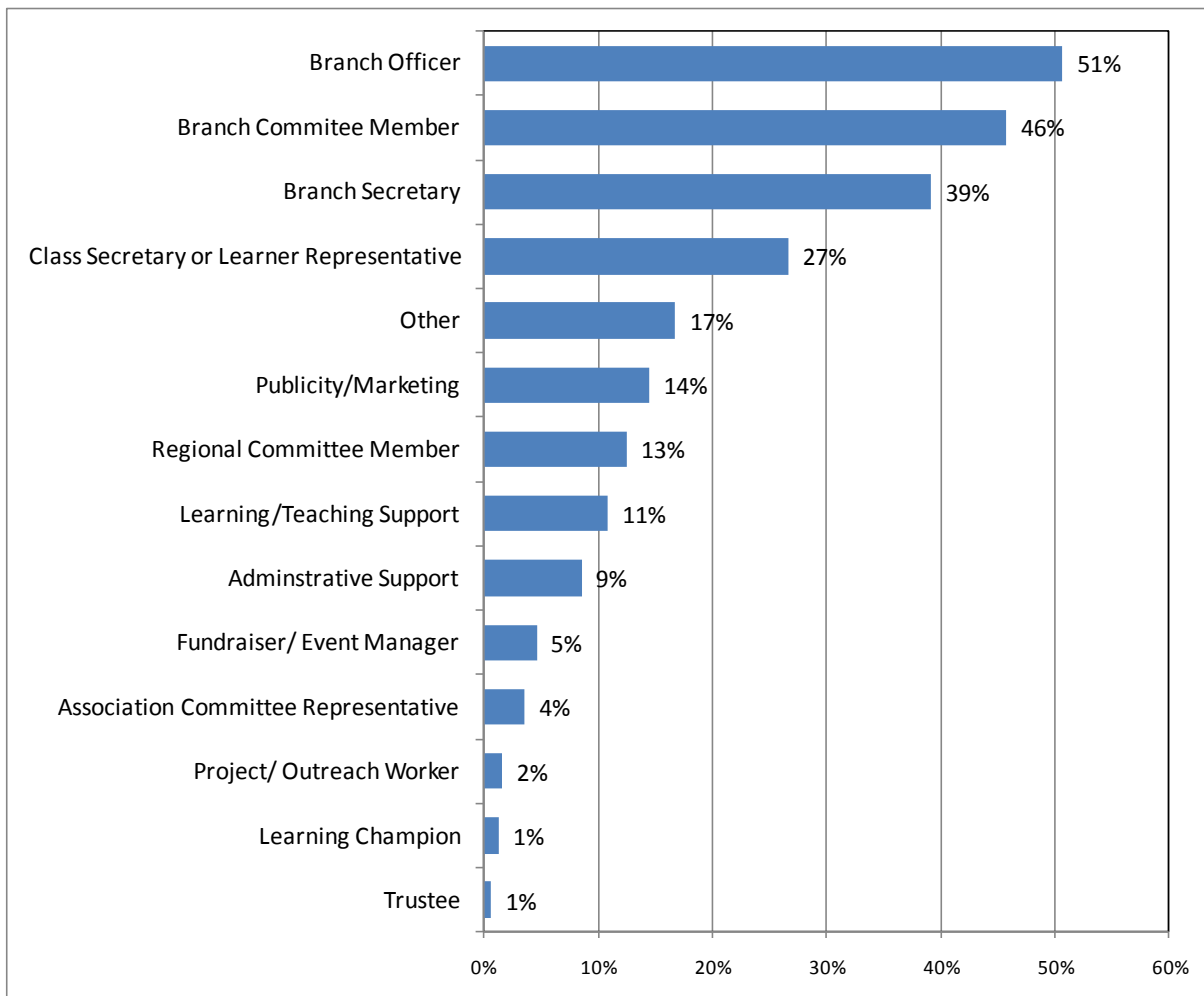


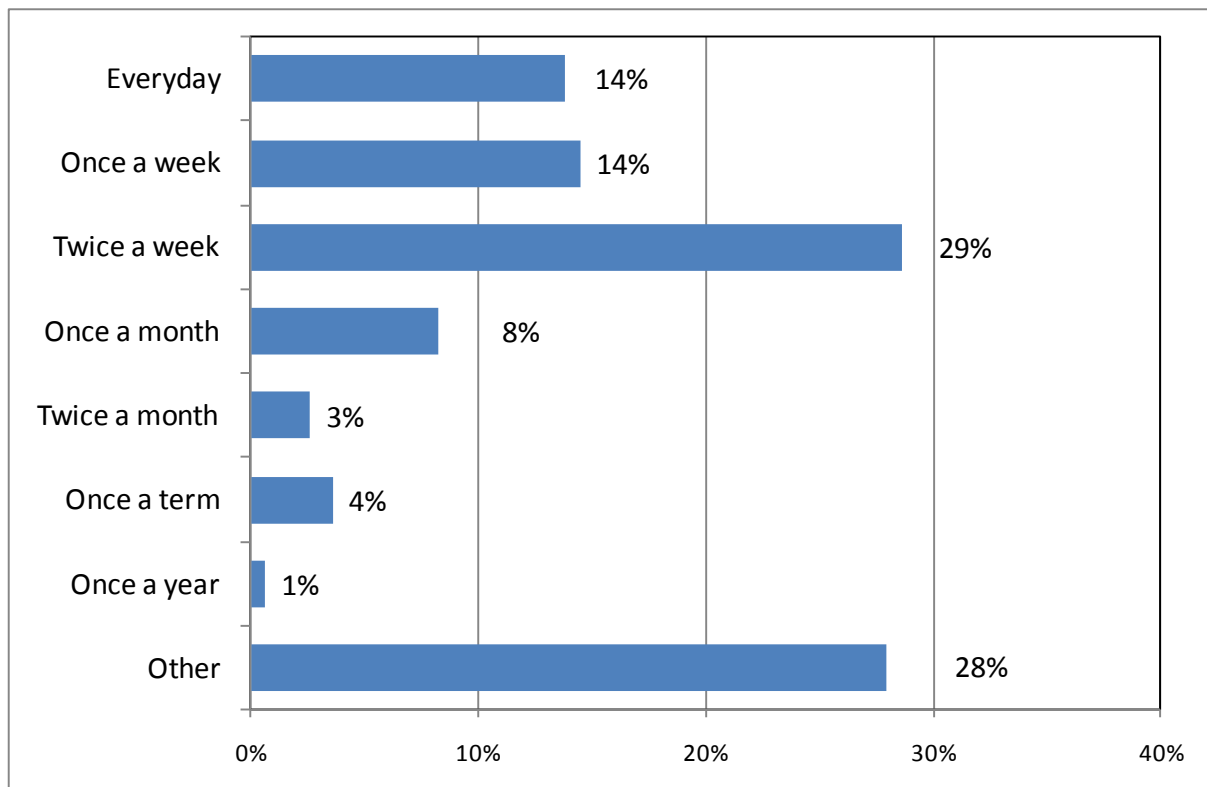
Figure 7 provides a detailed breakdown of volunteer hours. The majority of volunteers were spending up to five hours per month on volunteering activities whilst a smaller number were volunteering for over 20 hours per month. The latter were typically engaged in committee duties or secretarial, administrative or office work. The table clearly shows the wide range of hours spent by volunteers as well as the wide range of activities they were engaged in.

Figure 7: Hours spent on volunteer activities per month by category

Activity	1-2 hours	3-5 hours	6-10 hours	10-15 hours	16-20 hours	20+ hours	Rating count
Raising money or taking part in sponsored events	4	1	1	1	0	0	7
Leading a group	6	9	10	4	1	4	34
Being a member of a committee	108	72	28	10	4	12	234
Organising or helping run an activity or event	64	38	18	7	2	6	135
Visiting people	8	4	0	0	0	0	12
Classroom support	28	18	15	6	5	5	77
Befriending or mentoring	7	4	2	0	1	0	14
Giving advice or information	55	17	3	1	4	2	82
Secretarial, administrative or office work	71	58	27	4	4	16	180
Providing care and support	8	5	0	0	0	2	15
Governance activities (i.e. decision making)	48	20	5	2	3	1	79
Recruiting	21	9	1	0	0	2	33
Marketing/ Publicity	78	27	6	1	0	2	114
Partnership Development	6	1	0	0	0	0	7
Representing/ Campaign	15	3	1	2	1	1	23
Conducting research	5	4	0	0	0	0	9

Figure 8 provides further insight into the frequency of volunteering. Over 57 percent of respondents said they engaged in volunteering activities at least once a week, with 29 percent volunteering twice a week, and 14 percent every day. Less than 5 percent of respondents said they volunteered once a term or less frequently.

Figure 8: Frequency of Volunteering



1.5 Estimating the Pound Plus Value of Volunteers

The survey responses allow us to estimate the total Pound Plus contribution from volunteers. The number of volunteer hours can be converted into a financial contribution by multiplying it by an appropriate hourly rate.

Figure 9 summarises the total number of volunteer hours per month and the roles that the volunteers were undertaking. This is based on 304 survey responses.

Monthly volunteer hours from 304 volunteer survey sample = 4,683

Figure 12: Summary of Volunteer Hours

Volunteering Activity	Hours /month
Raising money or taking part in sponsored events	31
Leading a group	275
Being a member of a committee	1116
Organising or helping run an activity or event	639
Visiting people	28
Classroom support	502
Be-friending or mentoring	42.5
Giving advice or information	299.5
Secretarial, administrative or office work	998.5
Providing care and support	72
Governance activities (i.e. decision making)	292
Recruiting	115.5
Marketing/ Publicity	126
Partnership Development	13
Representing/ Campaigning	106.5
Conducting research	23.5
Transport	3
Total Number of volunteer hours per month	4683

WEA volunteers are actively engaged for approximately nine months in any academic year.

Estimated annual volunteer hours from 304 volunteer sample (assume 9 months) = 42,147

The WEA estimates that approximately 2,800 volunteers are engaged across the country (1,643 are currently on the WEA database and the remainder are yet to be added to the database). We have assumed that the survey sample is broadly representative of the population as a whole and can therefore estimate the total volunteer hours nationally (multiplying sample hours by 2,800 and dividing by the sample size of 304).

Estimated number of volunteer hours for national population of 2,800 volunteers = 388,196

The monetary value of this volunteering is the direct cost saving to the WEA from using volunteers. This is calculated by multiplying volunteer hours by £11.09 which is the Community Development Foundation's financial proxy for one hour's volunteering, based on the 2010 ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) median gross hourly earnings rate. This figure is also used by the Government's Community First project (overseen by Cabinet Office/OCS).

Total Pound Plus Value from Volunteering (assuming £11.09 per hour) = £4.31 million.