

## **Appendix V**

### **VISPA Volunteering Programme Annual Report 2025-2026**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This report provides a review of the VISPA (Volunteering in Sport and Physical Activity) Programme delivered across all Active4Today sites and community sports clubs from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. It is important to point out that although Southwell Leisure Centre's figures will be within this report, they will not be analysed in future reports due to changes in management.
- 1.2 It provides a holistic view of the programme and outlines key performance indicators that reflect continued growth and impact, whilst highlighting areas of success and opportunities for further development.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 The VISPA Volunteering programme was originally created in 2009 by the Sports Development Team at Newark and Sherwood District Council, following funding received from Sport England. The scheme was designed to recruit volunteers from district based secondary schools, to support events that took place in leisure centres and community sports club settings, which would ultimately increase participation in sport and physical activity. Volunteers were recruited from schools across the district and the scheme supported sports leaders to complete a compulsory number of voluntary hours, to the benefit of the wider community.

#### **3. Aim and offer**

- 3.1 The aim of the programme is to provide an opportunity for young people aged over 14 years, to gain insight and experience in the sport and leisure industry. Volunteers shadow and support qualified coaches, who pass on their experience and knowledge through the staff/volunteer mentor relationship.
- 3.2 The current programme is split into two sections, VISPA and VISPA Academy.
- 3.3 The VISPA programme supports volunteers who give an hour of their time each week. This option aligns well with other opportunities, including the completion of compulsory volunteer hours for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Volunteers can support activities within two settings,
  - i) Active4Today Leisure Centres (Newark, Southwell and Dukeries). Volunteers support members of the coaching team and can choose to shadow coaches and gain experience in activities including swimming, trampolining, and gymnastics.

- ii) Community Sports Clubs (based in Newark and Sherwood). Volunteers shadow a club mentor and support with coaching, officiating, administration and development of club social media platforms.
- 3.4 During the year, the VISPA Academy programme was available to access at Newark Sports and Fitness Centre, Dukeries Leisure Centre and Southwell Leisure Centre. Volunteers attend for 2 hours or more each week and shadow coaches providing swimming, gymnastics or trampolining sessions. In addition, volunteers support Active4Today's Holiday Activity programme, in-house competitions and key events during the year.
- 3.5 VISPA Academy enables volunteers to gain additional skills through a programme of internal and external training. Dedicated volunteers are supported to access National Governing Body training opportunities and if successfully completed, will be rewarded with a guaranteed interview for paid employment with Active4Today.
- 4. Promoting the VISPA scheme**
- 4.1 The scheme is primarily promoted to young residents of Newark and Sherwood through engagement in 5 district based secondary schools - Newark Academy, Suthers School, Magnus Academy, Minster School, Dukeries Academy and Joseph Whitaker, as well as Tuxford Academy, which sits outside of the district, however, many district-based students attend the school. Additionally, the scheme is also promoted at Young People's Centres and targeted community groups.
- 4.2 Active4Today attend school and community-based events to promote volunteering to students in school years 8-12, this includes career fairs, mock interviews, assemblies, open days, and community fairs.
- 4.3 The Active4Today website and APP provide additional promotion to members and non-members. With information including frequently asked questions and application details easily accessible. Further promotion of the scheme takes place on social media, specifically TikTok and Facebook which highlights individual volunteers and their experiences volunteering with Active4Today.
- 4.4 Development of VISPA opportunities has been taking place on TikTok during this period, in a bid to increase the reach of the programme to targeted demographics (14-18 years) across the locality. Content has included following and recreating appropriate fun trends, 'getting to know' volunteers, answering interactive questions, creating fun challenges and general promotion of volunteering opportunities. These videos have been a resounding success with the most viewed TikTok gaining 13,800 views and the next highest gaining 10,400 views to date. This has supported the channel to grow significantly with 47,320 views across all posted videos on the channel in the 2025/2026 period.

## 5. VISPA and VISPA Academy recruitment and induction

- 5.1 The combined VISPA/VISPA Academy application e-form is located on the Active4Today website. The form collects personal information, contact details and gives options for a range of sports young people can volunteer in. As part of this recruitment process applicants are required to complete a medical questionnaire, disclosure of convictions and volunteer agreement, and have a short conversation with the volunteer co-ordinator, who assesses their application prior to finding a suitable placement.
- 5.2 All volunteers undertake an induction to understand the expectations, and key information is shared to make sure they are safe. Additional training is offered for leisure centre placements, through the Ambition Academy online platform regarding safeguarding.

## 6. Analysis of current offer and delivery

- 6.1 During this period recruitment for the volunteer scheme took place at 12 events, which engaged 169 young people from across Newark and Sherwood. Engagement in the programme was highest at careers fair events as outlined in table 1.

| School events attended 2025-2026               | Numbers engaged* |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Joseph Whitaker Careers Fair                   | 40               |
| Dukeries Academy Mock Interviews               | 6                |
| Joseph Whitaker Mock Interviews Event          | 4                |
| Future First Careers Expo                      | 12               |
| Southwell Minster Mock Interviews Event        | 5                |
| Newark Academy Careers Fairs                   | 20               |
| Newark Academy Year 8 Careers Presentation     | 5                |
| You Can Do Sport Careers Presentation          | 30               |
| West Notts College Careers Presentations       | 15               |
| Southwell Minster Year 11 Careers Presentation | 6                |
| Magnus Academy Careers Fair                    | 20               |
| DWP Young People Jobs Fair                     | 6                |
| <b>Total (12 events)</b>                       | <b>169</b>       |

Table 1. \*People engaged in conversation regarding the volunteering programme

- 6.2 Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, Active4Today received a total of 46 applications, with 28 active volunteers being part of the programme across the year. Sports supported include swimming, gymnastics and trampolining at Newark Sport and Fitness Centre, Dukeries Leisure Centre and Southwell Leisure Centre.

| Period       | VISPA     | VISPA Academy |
|--------------|-----------|---------------|
| Quarter 1    | 14        | 1             |
| Quarter 2    | 5         | 1             |
| Quarter 3    | 13        | 9             |
| Quarter 4    | 3         | 0             |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>35</b> | <b>11</b>     |

Table 2 - Sign-up times during the year are outlined below

- 6.3 Lower numbers of applications are received during the Christmas and school summer holiday periods.
- 6.4 During the second quarter, two VISPA Academy volunteers successfully completed the STA Swimming Teachers Award, progressed to interview and secure employment for teaching positions within the Company. They are now established members of the Active4Today team. In addition, 2 VISPA Academy volunteers at NSFC attended the Level 1 General Gymnastics Award following their long-term commitment to the programme.
- 6.5 Active4Today has a strong working partnership with Portland College, a specialist college providing education and training opportunities to 16–25-year-olds, with additional needs and/or disabilities. The college is recognised for its provision in autism support.
- 6.6 In partnership with Portland College, A4T offers short term VISPA placements to students and supported internships at Blidworth Leisure Centre and Dukeries Leisure Centre. They are taken on as a volunteer and support fitness instructors with general tasks in the fitness suite and help during fitness classes.
- 6.7 Throughout 2025/26, there was one student taking up the opportunity of a longer term supported internship. This has been a great success with Active4Today staff providing plenty of positive feedback regarding the student. This is an added element alongside the VISPA programme, due to the long-established partnership with Portland College.

## 7. Data analysis/key performance indicators

- 7.1 A total of 35 VISPA applications were received between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026, in comparison, 9 applications being received during the previous year, as shown in table 3. This increase is a result of the expanded community volunteer offer, with a bigger promotion coming from this aspect of the programme compared to VISPA Academy.

| Site          | Number of VISPA Applications |           |          |          |          |           |          |          |          |           |
|---------------|------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
|               | Q1                           |           | Q2       |          | Q3       |           | Q4       |          | YEAR     |           |
|               | 24-25                        | 25-26     | 24-25    | 25-26    | 24-25    | 25-26     | 24-25    | 25-26    | 24-25    | 25-26     |
| DLC           | 1                            | 1         | 0        | 1        | 0        | 3         | 0        | 0        | 1        | 5         |
| NSFC          | 2                            | 13        | 3        | 2        | 0        | 9         | 2        | 2        | 7        | 26        |
| SLC           | 0                            | 0         | 0        | 2        | 0        | 1         | 1        | 1        | 1        | 4         |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>3</b>                     | <b>14</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>13</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>35</b> |

Table 3 – Number of VISPA applications received

- 7.2 There were 11 VISPA Academy applications received during the year which is a significant decrease on the previous year when there were 30 applications. Table 4 below, breaks down applications per site and per quarter. As set out in paragraph 7.1,

the community aspect of the programme was the main focus of the year, which resulted in less take up of the VISPA Academy. This would explain the decrease in applications compared to the previous year.

| Site  | Number of VISPA Academy Applications |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|-------|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | Q1                                   |       | Q2    |       | Q3    |       | Q4    |       | YEAR  |       |
|       | 24-25                                | 25-26 | 24-25 | 25-26 | 24-25 | 25-26 | 24-25 | 25-26 | 24-25 | 25-26 |
| DLC   | 2                                    | 1     | 1     | 0     | 3     | 1     | 1     | 0     | 7     | 2     |
| NSFC  | 4                                    | 0     | 6     | 0     | 5     | 7     | 5     | 0     | 20    | 7     |
| SLC   | 2                                    | 0     | 0     | 1     | 1     | 1     | 0     | 0     | 3     | 2     |
| Total | 8                                    | 1     | 7     | 1     | 9     | 9     | 6     | 0     | 30    | 11    |

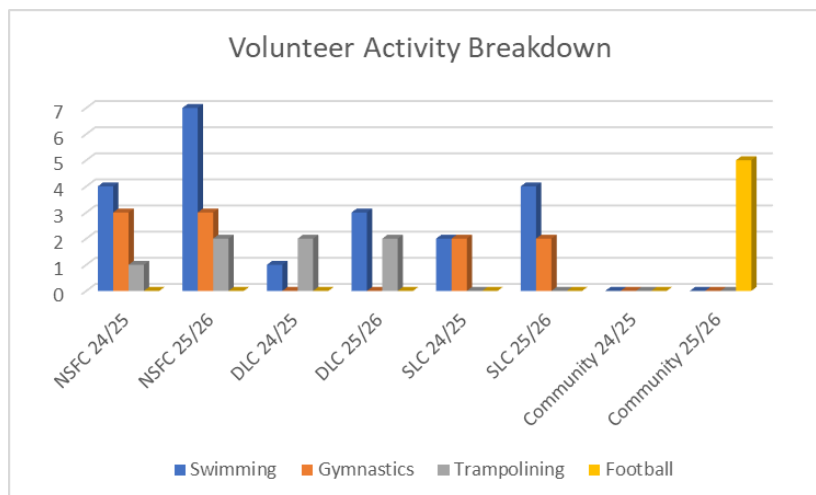
Table 4 – Number of VISPA Academy Applications received

7.3 In table 5 below site-specific uptake for VISPA and VISPA Academy applications in 24/25 compared with 25/26 is shown. The data shows that there has been a reduction in the programme uptake in comparison to the previous year. This is due to the engagement period from application to first contact and experience shows that young people need much faster initial contact whilst their interest is at its highest level.

| Site  | 2024/25  | 2025/26  |
|-------|----------|----------|
| DLC   | 4 (50%)  | 3 (43%)  |
| NSFC  | 13 (48%) | 9 (28%)  |
| SLC   | 4 (100%) | 3 (50%)  |
| TOTAL | 21 (54%) | 15 (33%) |

Table 5 – The Uptake Rate of People being Inducted into the Programme from the Number of Applications

7.4 The bar chart below shows the number of volunteers and the sporting activity they are supporting at each leisure centre site. The most popular activity chosen at all sites was swimming.



Graph 1 – A breakdown of Volunteers' Choice of Activity per Site for 25/26

## 8. Programme Development

- 8.1 Following development of the VISPA Community programme last year, volunteers have been recruited to support the Positive Pathways (diversionary activities) project funded by the Nottinghamshire Office of Police and Crime Commissioner. There were 4 initial volunteers who supported Footy Fun sessions, and the team are currently promoting opportunities to support Basketball session in Ollerton and Boxing Fitness sessions in Newark.
- 8.2 Ambition Academy online training platform was introduced to support new and existing volunteers in their volunteering journey. This training (Safeguarding Children, Fire Safety and Manual Handling) ensures that volunteers receive a foundational level of knowledge, before beginning their volunteering across the Company.

## 9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The main success during the year was the retention of 14 volunteers with Active4Today from 24/25, this reflects the strong focus on retention, through offering a wider range of volunteering and additional training opportunities.
- 9.2 There was a clear shift in applications from the previous year, with a greater number of VISPA applications being received suggesting young people are attracted by the additional delivery opportunities available.
- 9.3 There was a slight decrease in the volunteer uptake rate in 2025/26 compared to the previous year. This is due to critical engagement periods of the potential new volunteer, whilst they are at their peak interest level in becoming a volunteer.
- 9.4 Application numbers have been sustained this year, suggesting ongoing demand for the programme.

- 9.5 It was a positive to see 2 volunteers progress to paid employment with Active4Today as assistant swim coaches. This shows the success that the volunteer pathway has for young people to gain employment with the Company.

## **10. Recommendations**

- a) Raise the profile of VISPA and broaden the reach of the programme through engaging activities and an interactive social media presence.
- b) Promote volunteer success and development through the VISPA reward pyramid and into paid employment.
- c) Embed the VISPA programme into the local school and youth service offer ensuring targeted groups access the opportunity to progress from volunteering into paid employment.
- d) Develop a broader volunteer training programme to develop their skills and gain new opportunities.
- e) Engage older volunteers (18+) to support for Positive Pathways and Park Tennis opportunities, further supporting communities to become physically active.
- f) Review the administrative aspect of the programme to ensure contact is made with the prospective volunteers within a 7 day period after application is received.