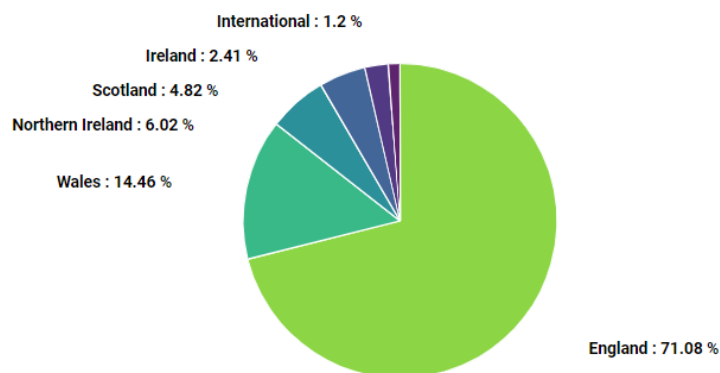


## Volunteer Survey Findings 2024

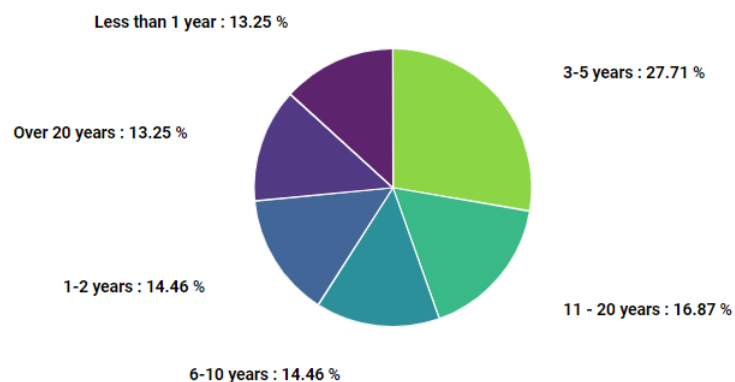
Thanks to everyone who completed the Volunteer Survey that was launched during Volunteers' Week in June. We had 83 responses which represents approximately 8% of our active volunteers.

The survey focused on two main areas of volunteering, people's experience of getting started and impact. This infographic shares some of the findings and what we're doing as a result.

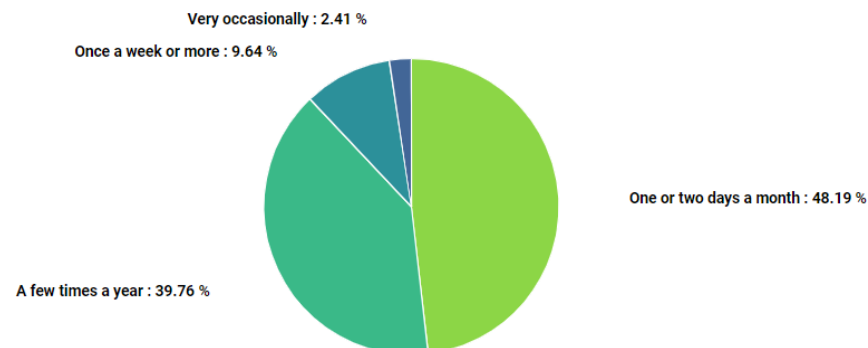
### Where are you based?



### How many years have you been volunteering with the RTPI?



### How often do you volunteer with the RTPI?



Respondents represented a good cross section of the different areas of involvement. The highest numbers of respondents were from Regional Activities Committees (21 respondents), Speaking at RTPI events (18 responses), organising CPD events (16 respondents), Awards Panel / Judging (16 respondents), National Executives (12 respondents), Young Planners Committees (12 respondents) and PAE (11 respondents). Positively, there was at least one respondent from every area of engagement offered as an option.

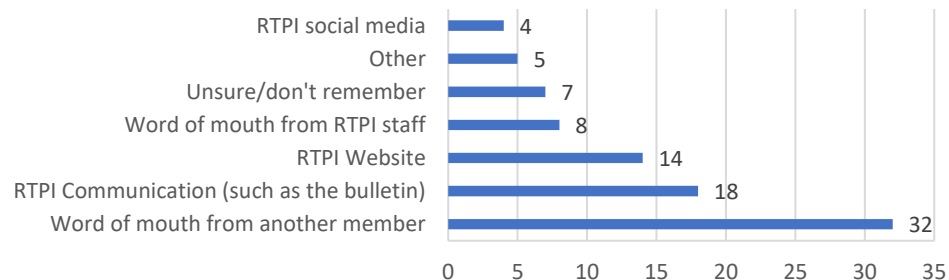
98% of RTPI volunteers would recommend volunteering to others

## Getting Started

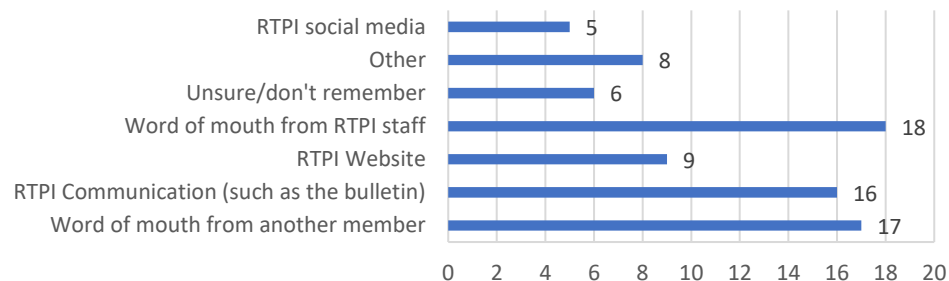
Why did you decide to get involved as a volunteer?  
(83 respondents)



How did you hear about the first role you started at the RTPI?  
(83 respondents)

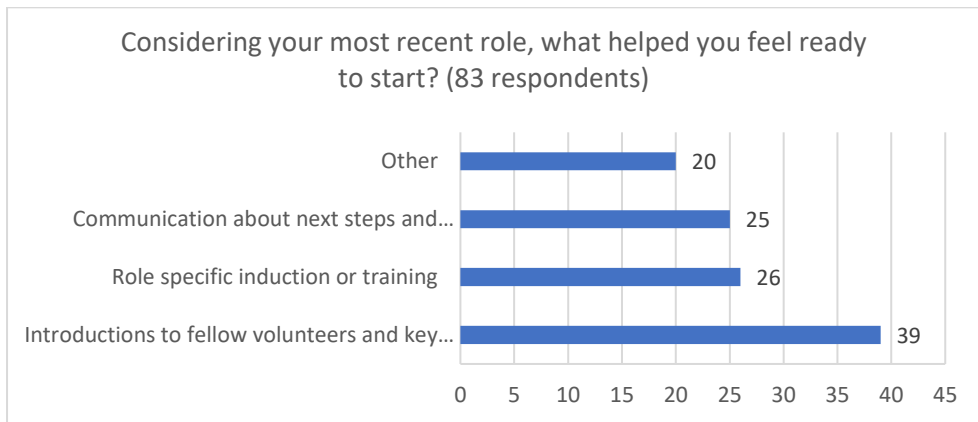
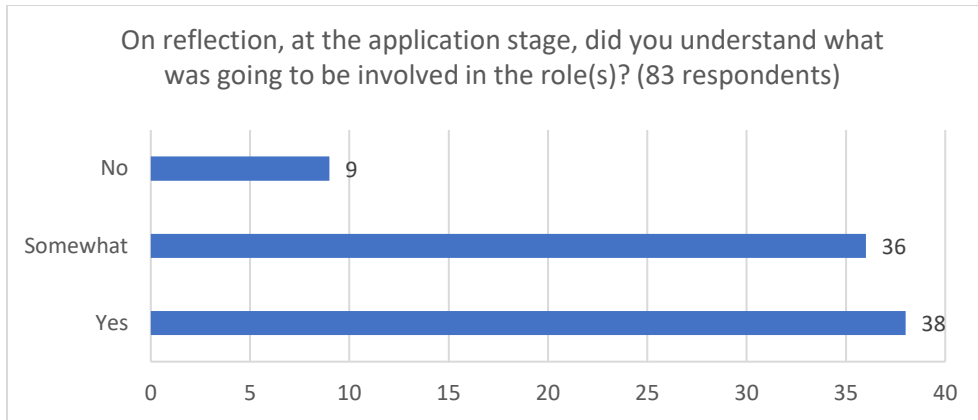


If involved in more than one role, how did you hear about the role you have most recently started? (83 respondents)



Volunteers were asked, **do you have any suggestions for how to improve the promotion of opportunities and the routes into them?**

- **Provide clear information and share role descriptions with potential and new volunteers.** – One summarised this as, “more and clearer information about what is required of the volunteer and what skills experience would be particularly useful to the role so that potential volunteers can match roles to their availability, interests and skills/experience.” Others said, “need to be much more explicit about time commitments” and “providing every new member with a TOR or role description”. Another said, “RTPI officer to speak to applicant and e-mail the role of the position applied for.”
- **Testimonials** – “testimonials from others who have done/are doing them” and “A virtual talk through / video of different opportunities by volunteers”. Another said, “key roles within the RTPI to speak/write about the roles and be clear about what is delivered by volunteers.”
- **Greater use of RTPI platforms, particularly LinkedIn** – “More widely discussed and shared on different RTPI platforms” and “LinkedIn as a professional networking tool could be harnessed better. Members that do not engage directly with the RTPI do tend to engage with LinkedIn”.
- **Mention volunteering at Events** – “Events should be labelled as hosted by East of England Volunteers or events which are attended by key roles eg. President or Chief Exec to include in their opening who has put the event together”.
- **Opportunities to find out more about roles** – “I would circulate more information about vacancies online and also in annual packs of information to members. And “perhaps at regional events include a section on popular ones about the role and importance of volunteers and have some members discuss what they do or hold a lunchtime seminar on it.”



The 'other' category here includes responses that can be grouped into these areas;

- Previous experience (10) – people mentioned 'long involvement with the institute' or 'experienced chair... so already alert to what's involved'
- Learning from others (4) – 'had seen others be members' and 'I already knew members on the RAC and RMB'
- Information provided (2) – 'online meeting with YP steering group' and 'information provided in my interviews and emailed responses to my queries'.
- Supportive employer (1) – 'having an employer supportive of my involvement and commitment to me providing time when needed during working hours'

- Nothing provided (3) – 'the nature of the work and necessary involvement was unexpected' and 'I didn't have any of the above but was OK just finding my way with ad hoc input from [staff].'

Volunteers were also asked; **do you have any suggested improvements to ensure you feel ready to start?**

To give a flavour of current experience, two respondents replied, "I think any of the induction things listed above could have been helpful, but it's not been a problem at all progressing as we have." And "I don't think many people 'feel ready to start' - you feel more comfortable after a few meetings and so ease into the role, getting more involved. But as meetings are spaced out, this can be slow."

**Clearer onboarding/training** – "A clearer on boarding which includes the structures of the RTPI and how the different groups/boards work together and what their remits are. This would have helped me to better understand what my role was and the expectations." And "Clear and comprehensive training (online or in person) is vital". Others picked up on the distinction that you might be new to a role but not new to volunteering, "If people already are volunteering but moving to a new role they should still have an induction."

**Support/named point of contact** – "Just a bit more support and knowing who to ask" and "More support from RTPI required".

**Better Communications** – There were different aspects to this, some referred to needing information in a timely manner, "Better communication about meeting dates (diary markers) as soon as possible". Others highlighted having communications about what volunteers do, "Short videos on social media with brief feedback about roles by existing volunteers can be very informative. Basically covering what they do and how much time they spend on volunteering for RTPI and what they have gained from this experience" or "there is a lot more information available now. Blogs and articles from other volunteers is always helpful too".

Some respondents felt the **communication** about time commitment required needed to be clearer, "To derive the best value from volunteering, members need to be aware that there is a significant time commitment in order to fulfil the role with merit."

And finally, others thought that opportunities to speak to lead staff or volunteers would be useful, “need for discussion with member of Committee appointed to discuss the appropriate contribution to Committee” and “I think having more conversations from [role] leads as to what it involves”.

Volunteers were also asked, **do you have any suggestions on how volunteering at the RTPI could be improved?**

**Clearer Communication** – “Greater communication of roles and expectations.” And “Some communications about meetings etc would benefit from a bit more notice”.

**Promotion of opportunities** – “Promote it more widely by encouraging existing volunteers to talk positively about it to others” and “Increased exposure to ‘good news’ stories on social media”. Another volunteer said, “Webinars or learning sessions for volunteers to explain to other RTPI members what they do and how they have helped and what they enjoyed.”

**Induction and training** – “Need more parameters training and guidance for rules of volunteering” and “Induction/training/guidance as to what I should be doing. The previous person in the role told me roughly what they were doing and said you get out what you put in. I have tried to do as much as I can but it can slip when things get busy so more structure/accountability might be useful - though I do like the flexibility.”

**Meetings** – “Less meetings... there are too many meetings. And there is a lot of time wasted on bigger meetings that lack specificity. Short, targeted meetings. And in person. Online doesn't achieve the shared learning and network building that in person does.” Another said, “face to face meetings for volunteers.”

**Recognition** – “Being better recognised! Volunteers want to feel appreciated and valued” and “I feel the RTPI could be more appreciative of the volunteers and their time, especially when most have full time jobs alongside their volunteering roles.”

**Processes** – “Flexibility at the regional level and more detail about the roles and real life case studies to make it real and appeal to those who may not have thought about it before” and “I understand that the RTPI is a large

organisation and there have to be standard processes and procedures across the country, but there are a number of these which have a real detrimental impact upon volunteers in some circumstances. Allowing some more flexibility, perhaps at the discretion of the regional coordinators would be a great help.”

## **Volunteer Hub**

Volunteers were asked, if applicable, whether they had any feedback on the Volunteer Hub. 38 responses were received.

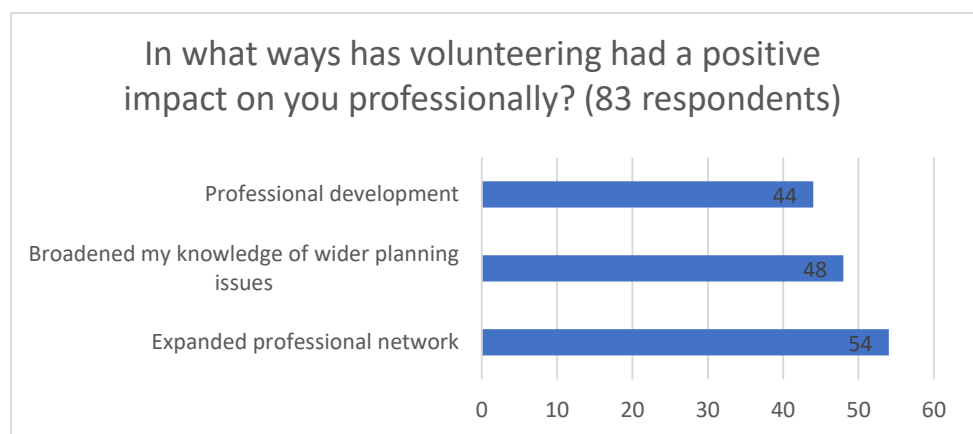
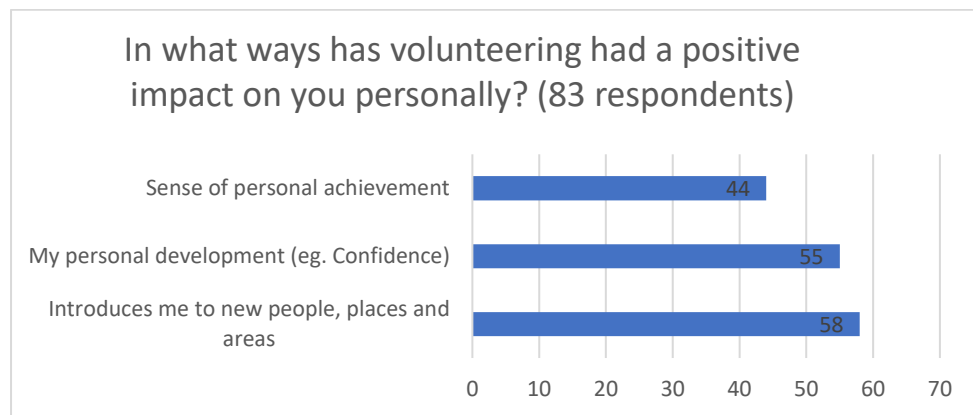
11 responded that they were not aware of the Volunteer Hub.

10 commented that the log in process is difficult. “Difficult initially to work out how to log in (but have cracked it now)” and “I'm afraid I am unable to access it because my work Microsoft keeps popping up and not recognising the RTPI link”.

6 responded that is useful or a good concept, “It's really useful to have all the papers in one place. As a volunteer with three different roles, it makes it easier to find papers!” and “Volunteer hub has been great so far. Really user friendly.”

11 gave more specific user feedback such as, “The volunteer hub is fine, we just use it to store documents. I wouldn't say there is any pull factors to actively use it though.” And “It would be good to have the option to chat with other volunteers as this would minimise the long chains of emails”. Similarly, another said, “It would be helpful if we could tag other members to action items and receive email correspondence re any updates to the documents.” A further respondent said, “A link from the main page would be good or when you log into your account on the main page”.

## Impact



Respondents were also given free space to share **what achievements they are most proud of from the last two years**. These responses highlight the variety of ways people contribute so a flavour is included here.

“helping steer decisions that affect members lives”

“contributing to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference of the Scottish Young Planners Network, having played an active part in the growth of the network since it’s infancy.”

“winning the young planners conference bid”

“helping a resident with anxiety issues gain planning permission for her household development. Her gratitude was so heartwarming, and I felt proud to have helped her.”

“taking on the nations and regions rep role”

“helping with enforcement guidance”

“being involved with it takes planners & campaign”

“supporting younger members of the profession through CPD events and contributing to the RTPI Cymru work on ‘Building Capacity’.

“inputting to the wider debate and understanding of the planning profession and ensuring that public sector planning has a voice at committee meetings.”

“helping to organise a CPD event”

“producing regional publications”

“active participation in education review”

“help to produce and chair multiple cross-regional webinars”

“I was proud to chair the Policy and Research Forum, it gave me a unique opportunity to step into a role that I hadn’t previously considered.”

“Support for degree accreditation at two universities.”

“Completely changing the profile and status of the awards and delivering a higher quality event and evidenced based winners including site visits. Plus recruiting a strong experienced and diverse panel that reflected the EDI pattern and sectors of the profession.”

“Delivering 2 successful webinars for each of the last 3 years, to over 150 Members on each occasion.”

“Taking role of MC for a young planners webinar.”

“volunteering flexibly while being a working mum to young children.”

“Probably delivering sessions at schools.”

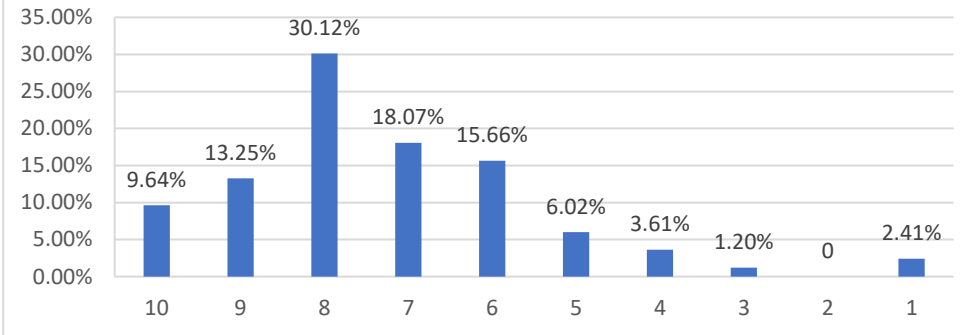
64% of respondents said that they feel their contribution helps achieve the objectives of a work area of the RTPI.

42% of respondents felt that their contribution helps deliver the corporate strategy.

54% of respondents feel that their contribution positively impacts the wider planning profession.

28% of respondents felt that their contribution positively impacts the wider community.

Please rate your overall satisfaction with your experience of volunteering at the RTPI (one being low and 10 high). (83 respondents)



87% of RTPI volunteers are satisfied with their experience of volunteering at the RTPI

## Your feedback will shape how we develop volunteering.

### Next steps

**Promotion** – The need for clearer information about roles and more ‘human’ ways of finding out about them has come through clearly. We plan to develop ‘**drop in**’ sessions for members to find out more about what’s on offer at the RTPi. We also need to harness the **power of word of mouth** and ask volunteers to share more of what they do, what their time achieves and what they gain from volunteering. **Testimonials and videos** from current volunteers will be developed in addition to the resources available. Mentioning volunteering opportunities at **events** is another opportunity for promotion.

**Role Descriptions** – this survey has highlighted that people don’t feel they have as much information as they’d like to make an informed decision about getting involved, or as much support as they need to feel ready to start. We need to provide role descriptions, in a standard format, that include a broad time commitment and who to contact to find out more. Role descriptions and Terms of Reference need to be available during recruitment and onboarding for reference.

**Recruitment** – Related to role descriptions and making things more ‘human’ we need to enable potential volunteers to speak to current volunteers or a lead staff member if they want to find out more about the role. Currently, we tend to promote a role description and ask people to apply, adding this step will help people make a more informed decision.

**Onboarding** – Respondents highlighted that they want greater support to feel ready to start. This includes a clear point of contact, providing clear communication about what is provided, access to resources and relevant induction and training. There is an Introduction to the RTPi and volunteering session, that very few volunteers were aware of. Role specific training needs to clarify the remit of the role/area of involvement and how it relates to other committees.

**Communication Internal** – There are now quarterly staff sessions for those that work with volunteers, to ensure everyone gets updates on updated practice. There is also a staff teams group for those that work with volunteers and resources on the intranet, including a staff checklist. The

Volunteer Project Co-ordinator also provides updates to SMT. However, more needs to be done to ensure developments are implemented and reaching everyone.

**Volunteer Hub** – In response to user feedback, a new way of logging in to the Volunteer Hub will be rolled out in September/October. This will allow people to access it directly from their member profile. The username, which has caused the majority of log in issues, will be auto-populated and users will only need to re-confirm their password. Other developments are needed too but we hope this will help significantly to make the Hub easier to use.

Thanks again to everyone that took the time to complete the survey, I hope you can see that your views are shaping volunteering development at the RTPi.

Zoe MacGregor, Volunteer Project Co-ordinator