
London 2012: A lasting legacy for volunteering?

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Abstract

London 2012 showed the volunteers brought much more than a cost saving, they played a fundamental role in the smooth running of the event and helped create a positive atmosphere that was expected to last beyond the Games. Figures reported, highlighted an increase in 2013 of the number of people involved in volunteering following London hosting the Games.

This paper seeks to explore the impact of volunteering in London following London 2012, considering motivations to volunteer; levels of volunteering pre and post the Games; and the effect of legacy, determining if the increase is attributed to a growth in episodic volunteering or formal regular volunteering. The findings recognise the need for a balanced approach to meet the needs of the volunteers and to sustain the services and needs of the local communities. To achieve legacy for volunteering, investment is required and a co-ordinated approach to drive that forward.

Introduction

There are various claims about the success of the 2012 Games and the impact this has had on volunteering. The joint report by the UK Government and the Mayor of London highlighted that there had been an increase in both formal and informal volunteering, halting the decline in volunteering rates since 2005 (Cabinet Office, 2013). The Sydney Games in 2000 saw a huge upswing in volunteering in the run-up to the Games and raised the profile of volunteering, but it only sustained a small increase in volunteering post the Games (Leigh, 2011). In the recent Government report 'Beyond 2012' DCMS (2012) two of the legacy outcomes regarding 'people' are to:

- encourage a new culture of volunteering; and
- enhance the potential of the Games to drive social change.

As the Chief Executive of Volunteer Centre Greenwich (VCG) a rapid increase was seen in the number of enquiries received for volunteering following the start of the recession, increasing from 3,937 in 2008-09, to 8,110 in 2009-10 (VCG, 2010). This figure dropped to 6,969 in 2012 (VCG, 2012), and to 5,152 in 2013 (VCG, 2013). The centre was involved in both recruitment for the Team London Ambassadors (TLAs) and the Greenwich 2012 local volunteering programme which included 164 volunteers. In the aftermath of the Games there was an expectation that, due to the raised profile of volunteering during the Games, this would generate an interest in volunteering and therefore the centre would see a marked increase, but as the figures show, this was not the case.

Volunteer centres traditionally promote a variety of volunteering opportunities mainly regular formal opportunities. VCG currently has 1294 volunteering opportunities of which 22 (2%) are event volunteering opportunities¹. This generated an interest into what had happened to all the volunteers involved in London 2012. Were they still volunteering? Had the Games inspired new volunteers?

The research was conducted to provide:

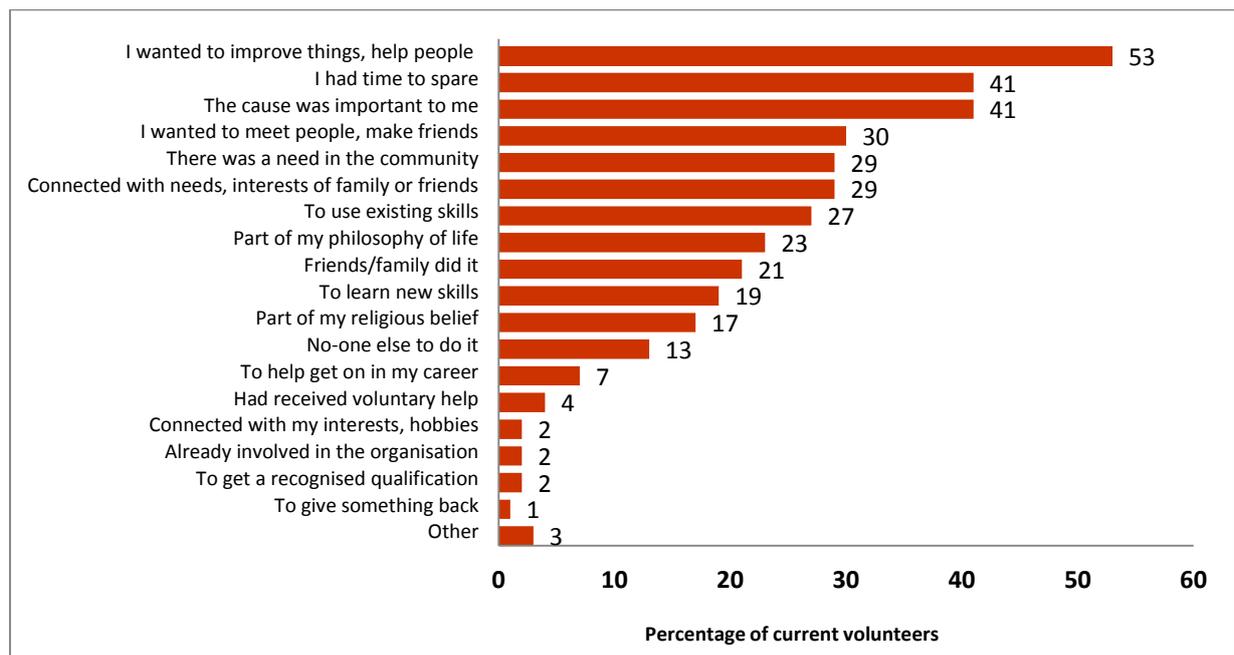
- an insight into the motivations for general volunteering compared to event volunteering
- the levels of volunteering pre and post the Games
- understanding of the profile of volunteering post London 2012
- demonstrating whether the legacy action plan in relation to volunteering is in process and impacting on the community of London

Motivations

Reasons that people give to volunteer are detailed in the Helping Out Survey 2007 and displayed in Figure 1 below:

¹ Figures obtained from VCG's database correct as at April 2014

Figure 1: Reasons for starting to volunteer



Low et al (2007, p. 5)

Motivation to volunteer at events, in particular large scale events such as the Games, inspires that involvement to be part of a prestigious, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. A survey conducted by the GLA (2012) which included the motivations to be a Team London Ambassador for London during the Games demonstrated that:

- Over two thirds (67%) said it was the chance to be part of the Games and the opportunity of a lifetime.
- 59% wanted to provide a friendly welcome to visitors in London.
- 58% wanted to share their love of London
- 34% wanted to meet new people and make new friends
- 29% wanted to gain new skills and experience

This demonstrates that the prestige of the event, the chance of a lifetime opportunity and the excitement are particular motivations that figure strongly in the decision to volunteer. This is reflected by the 240,000 applications received by LOCOG to be one of 70,000 Games Makers (Olympic.org, 2012) and the 23,000 people who registered to be one of the 8,000 TLAs (GLA, 2011). The number of volunteers involved at the Games has significantly risen since 1996. In 1992 at Barcelona 34,548 volunteers were involved jumping to 60,422 in 1996 at Atlanta (MacAloon, 2000). London 2012 involved 70,000 Games Makers of which 34%, (23,800) (Dickson and Benson, p.3) and 8,000 TLAs of which 59%, (4700)² were from London. This highlights the desire to be part of that 'Olympic family'.

Volunteering is going through a radical development as society changes and thus what an individual requires from being a volunteer alters. Indeed the changes with modern society and how that

² Personal email to the author from Team London 16th August 2013.

impacts on people's lives have led to an introduction of the phase 'new or modern' volunteering. In particular the term the short-term volunteer is used, 'the relatively new phenomenon' as described by Rochester (2006, p. 7). This type of volunteer does not see their involvement as a big part of their life nor has the desire to feel included as a part of any organisation. The 'traditional volunteer' is seen as undertaking a formal regular volunteering role in an organisation with a view to a long term commitment to the relationship. The episodic form of volunteering has risen significantly over recent years as reported by Taylor (2010).

However, Handy et al (2006) argues that episodic volunteering is not a new phenomenon. It is fair to say that episodic or occasional volunteering has always been undertaken, the phenomenon now is this is one of the most popular forms of volunteering, where once it was more of a rarity.

Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) do not see this as such a radical split between the volunteering world. They see the environment requiring a mixture of both, the collective and reflexive types of volunteering. surmising it as the 'ingredients blended together into personal volunteer cocktail' (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003, p.5). The study looks to identify the current balance of that mix and if it is one that supports the current voluntary environment by recognising the needs of both the volunteers and the roles and services required.

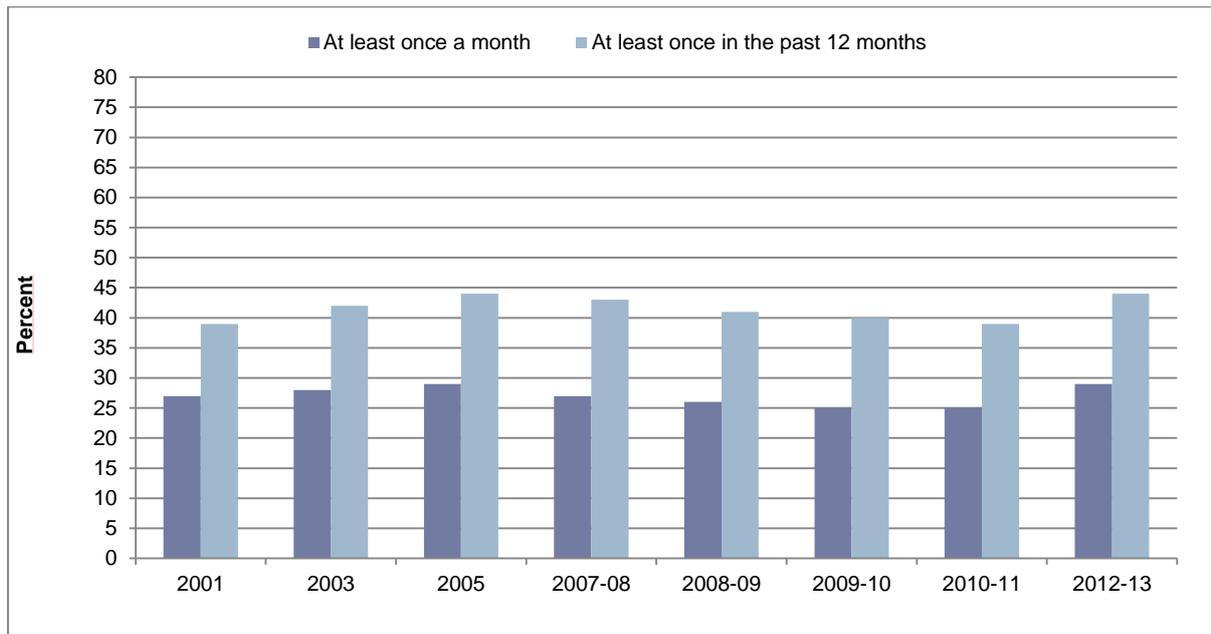
This leads to the question of legacy and whether event volunteering, in particular at a major sporting event, continues to capture and support that desire and enthusiasm to volunteer post London 2012. If so, is the increase mainly in the area of event volunteering and is that due to the community spirit feel of being involved at an event? (Stebbins and Graham 2004).

Levels of volunteering

The World Giving Index (CAF, 2012) highlighted that the level of formal volunteering for the UK in 2012 had dropped to 26% and 35th place, from 29% and 29th place in 2010 (CAF, 2010). In fact, the 2012 report states that there had been a 'global decline in the amount of giving and support for charity' (CAF, 2012, p.4). The report for 2013 displays that the UK has jumped up to a world-ranking place of 26th with the percentage of people undertaking formal volunteering to 29%, as in 2005 (CAF, 2013). Although it could be deduced that hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 would have had an impact on increasing this figure, the report states that 'the average percentage of people donating money, volunteering time, and helping a stranger, globally grew in 2012 in relation to 2011, despite a continued fall in the growth of the global economy from 4.0% to 3.2%'

The Community Life Survey 2012-13 is a representative survey of people over the age of 16 from England and Wales. Figure 2 details people who have regularly taken part in formal volunteering at least once a month or volunteered at least once a year, back to 2001.

Figure 2: People who participated in formal volunteering 2001-2013

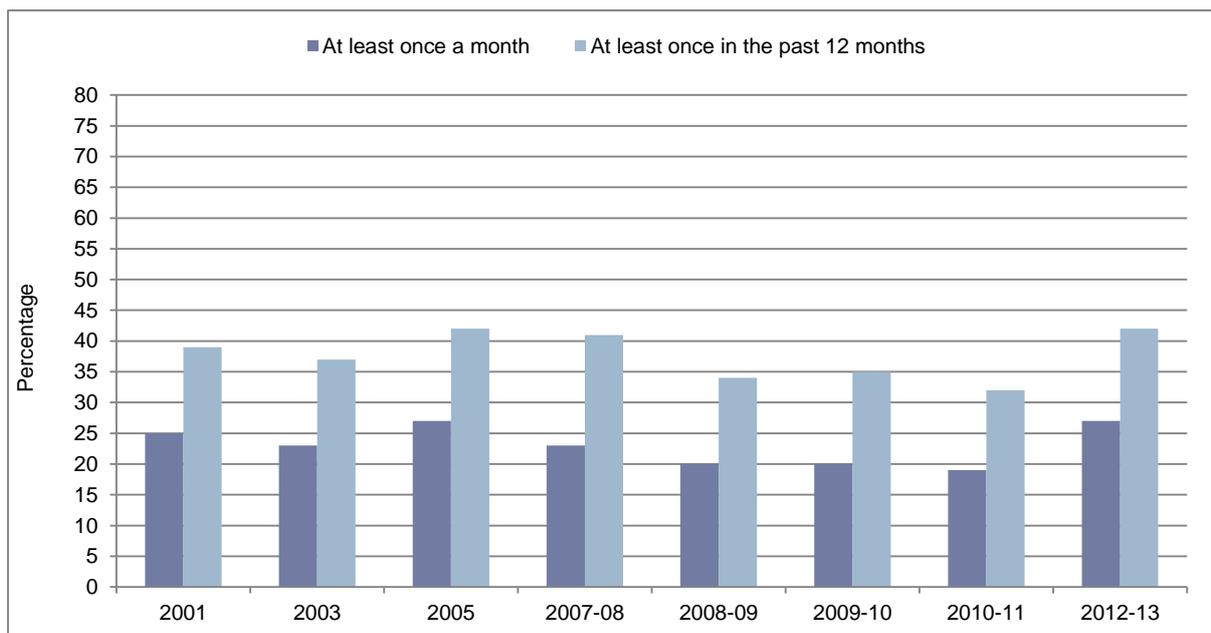


(Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2013)

It highlights the peak in 2005 of both people who volunteered once a month (29%) and at least once in the past 12 months (44%). This dropped slightly in 2007-08 continuing to drop over the next three years to 25% regularly volunteering at least once a month and 39% formally volunteering at least once a year. 2012 – 2013 then reports an increase of 44% formally volunteering at least once a year and back to 29% regularly volunteering at least once a month, as in 2005.

Figure 3 details the levels of volunteering on London within the same period.

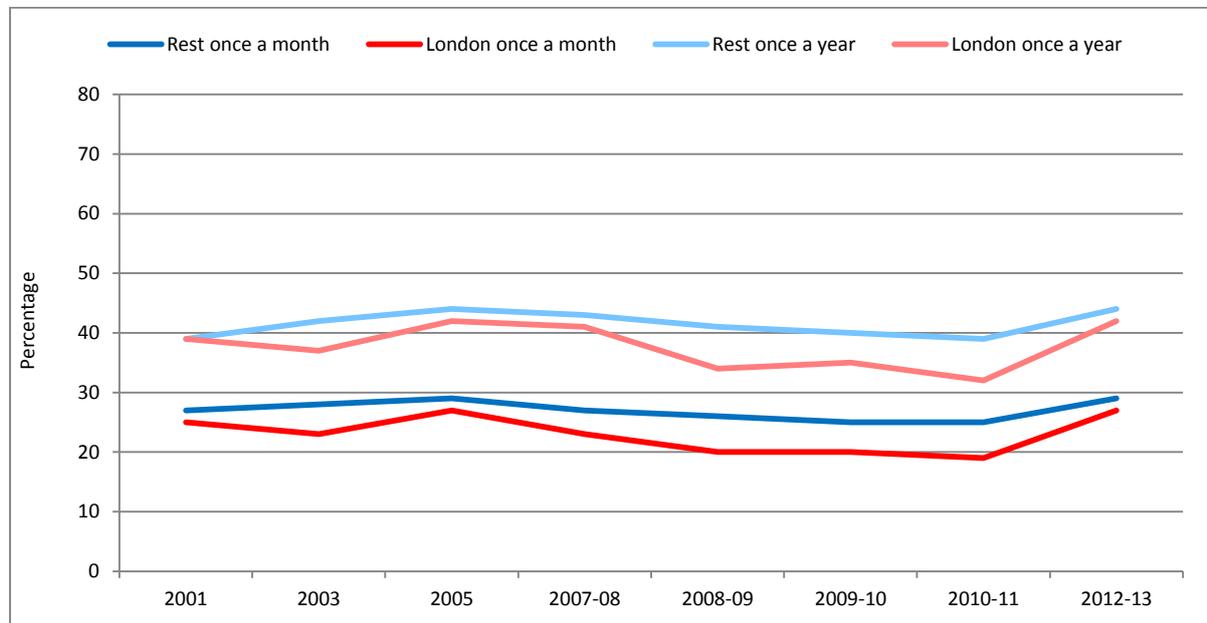
Figure 3: People who participated in formal volunteering in London from 2001-2013



(Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2007-08, 2010-11, 2013)

Figure 4 compares both sets of figures, clearly demonstrating that the patterns of participation in volunteering in London follow a very similar pattern in relation to the rest of England and Wales. For 2012-13, there would have been an expectation that the figures for London would be higher in view of the amount of events and activities directly taking place in London.

Figure 4: Comparison of formal volunteering between London and England & Wales 2001-2013



(Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2007-08, 2010-11, 2013)

The Institute of Volunteering Research undertakes an annual survey based on the financial year, which is circulated to all the Volunteer Centres in England. These surveys, as displayed in table 2, show that the average number of enquiries received by an individual volunteer centres were:

Table 1: Number of volunteer enquiries

	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Mean	1574	1720 (1903)	2156
Median	979	881 (930)	1086

(IVR, 2010, 2011, 2012)

75,741 volunteers were seen by London volunteer centres in 2012-13 as cited by Greater London Volunteering (GLV)³. This equated to a mean average for volunteer enquiries in this period of 2,705, providing a median average of 2,587. This demonstrates a 138% higher average for London compared to the national average of 1,085 in 2011-12.

There is a need and a place for various different types of volunteering opportunities and a requirement to look at how these are delivered, to meet the needs and lifestyles of today's individuals in society. However, there is also a need to ensure that the many services that are provided by the voluntary and community sector can still be maintained. London 2012 has provided

³ Figures taken from a presentation given by GLV at the Big Network Volunteering Event 2013.

a great platform to highlight the importance of volunteering and the benefits that it brings, not just to the organisations and communities involved, but to the individual who participates.

An article written by Mahon from the Third Sector Research Centre (2012, para 1) asked 'Will Olympic volunteering have an enduring impact?' The article questioned whether new people had been attracted to volunteer. It went on to highlight that 'there are regular reports of important voluntary organisations which are suffering financially or even going into liquidation, and many would argue that it is more of a priority to find support for them, than for high-profile events' (Mahon, 2012, para 10).

There are differences of opinion as to how many first time volunteers had been involved in the Games. The survey conducted with the Games Makers, reported by Dickson and Benson (2013), showed that 80% had previously volunteered in comparison to reports from DCMS that '40% of applicants had indicated that London 2012 would be their first time to volunteer', (DCMS, 2012, p.51). It also highlighted those who intended to increase their volunteering hours were employed full-time or full-time students. Those employed casually, part-time or retired, indicated they would do the same or less. Surveys conducted by the GLA to the TLAs (GLA, 2012) cited that 75% of the TLAs had previously volunteered with only 24% stating that they had not previously volunteered. This demonstrates that a large proportion had already volunteered so would very likely continue to volunteer anyway.

The research looks to establish whether the increase in volunteering reported by the Government since London 2012, was due to an increase in volunteering generally, or an increase mainly in episodic volunteering opportunities and what does that mean for legacy and volunteering. Is legacy facilitating and supporting episodic volunteering which will lead to volunteering driving social change, or is event volunteering merely an incentive to entice people into volunteering? Had the profile of volunteering during the Games inspired and encouraged new people to volunteer; are those already involved continuing to volunteer and, if so what type of volunteering are they participating in? The Games seems to have resulted in an increase in volunteering following a lull in reported figures since 2007. The level reported showed a return to the same figures published in 2005. This was following the promotion and activities of the Year of the Volunteer 2005. The increase following the Games from 2011 to 2013 is higher than from 2003 to 2005, but the hosting and investment in such a prestigious event as London 2012 would draw expectations that this would be the case.

Research

The research strategy adopted for this piece of empirical research was the survey adopting a mixed methods approach of obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data through mixed-model research. This provided triangulation as two or more independent sources of data were collected through the combined use of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires and compared to the findings highlighted by the literature review. Three pieces of research were undertaken.

Firstly a survey comprising of seven questions was circulated to the volunteer centres in London focusing on the comparison of statistical information in relation to volunteering enquiries from 2011-12 to 2012-13 and the profile of volunteering. Results were analysed through Survey Monkey.

The second form of research adopted was to conduct semi-structured interviews with representatives from key volunteering infrastructure organisations and legacy partners.

The organisations interviewed were identified through 'purposeful sampling' (Fisher, 2010) based on the following:

- NCVO – representing volunteering infrastructure for England
- GLV – regional partnership body for volunteering in London.
- Team London – The Mayor's volunteering programme for London.
- Join In – an official London 2012 legacy project. Their aim is to match sports clubs and organisations with people who wish to make a difference.
- Spirit of London 2012 Trust – money raised from the sale of the Olympic village will fund a network of projects to help secure a lasting social and community legacy following the Games.

To analyse and interpret this qualitative data, key themes were identified, enabling the data to be categorised, (Saunders et al, 2009). These themes included:

- Profile of volunteering
- Impact of London 2012 on volunteering
- The Impact of legacy on volunteering in London
- Impact on regular formal volunteering

The third and final form of research undertaken was to conduct a survey among the TLAs, who live in London. 8,000 TLAs were involved in the volunteering programme with, as advised by Team London, 4,700 from the London boroughs, providing the sample frame⁴. The purpose of these questions was to see if volunteers had continued volunteering and, if so, what type of volunteering opportunities they had been involved in and how they had found out about the range of volunteering opportunities available. Unfortunately this method of research did not receive a high enough response to be able to provide a valid or reliable source of information.

Findings and analysis

Levels of volunteering in London

33 volunteer centres are listed in London (GLV, 2013); however, some volunteer centres had closed. Consequently 30 volunteer centres were approached to take part with 28 responding, equating a 93% response rate.

The findings from the research showed that overall there had been an increase in volunteering in London. This was somewhat uneven as to its distribution, with 31% reporting an increase in the six months following the Games, increasing to 44% at the time of the survey at the end of 2013. When looking at the comparison of the total number of volunteers registered in London through volunteer centres between 2011-12 and 2012-13, the findings report an increase of 5%.

The Giving Time and Money report, (Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2013) detailed that annual formal volunteering in London had increased by 10%. However, this was over a two-year period comparing

⁴ Personal email to the author from Team London 16th August 2013

figures from 2010-11 to 2012-13. The figures from the London volunteer centres show an increase over a one-year period. The report also detailed, that the 10% increase in annual formal volunteering could be due to the raising of the profile of volunteering of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In fact there would be a strong indication that the increase was due to several factors. This would include the involvement of the high number of volunteers involved in all the volunteering programmes associated with London 2012 and the number of volunteers involved through legacy partners' events as reported by the Committee of Public Accounts (2013). This reported 300,000 people taking part in 6,000 events in the last year up to when the report was compiled in March 2013.

The Giving Time and Money report (Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2013) shows that regular formal volunteering increased for London by 8%. Again, this figure shows an increase over a two-year period compared to the increase by volunteer centres, recorded over a one year period from 2012 – 2013 of 5%.

The Year of the Volunteer 2005 brought about an increase in volunteering for London, again over a two-year period, of 5% in annual formal volunteering and a 4% increase in regular formal volunteering (Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2013). The campaign was undertaken with little lead in time and yet there was a marked increase in volunteering from the 2003 figures with an investment of over £6m. The amount of investment for the volunteer programme for London 2012 would have been significantly higher with the London Ambassador programme alone requiring £7m investment (Wiggins, 2011), without the cost of the Games Makers programme. This provides an expectation that the increase in volunteering would be higher, at least continue to peak at that level or indeed increase as the legacy plan for volunteering delivers over the remaining of the ten year timeline set.

It leaves the question whether the level of investment was significant in proportion to the return on volunteering legacy.

Profile of volunteering

Representatives from two organisations interviewed stated that the media played a part in raising the profile of volunteering with one describing event volunteering as being perceived as 'glam' volunteering. Therefore, has London 2012 highlighted and popularised event volunteering or volunteering generally? Will it entice volunteers because of the 'glam' of volunteering at high-profile events and how or will that be used to encourage some volunteers to engage with regular formal volunteering roles? These roles provide the support to ensure the sustainability of many services that support the residents of local communities and as highlighted there is a need for a mixture of both collective and reflexive volunteering, (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003).

From the survey conducted with the volunteer centres in London, only 50% reported any increase due to the raised profile of volunteering. Therefore, has the profile of volunteering and the encouragement into event volunteering tipped the balance towards recruiting more reflexive volunteers involved in episodic volunteering?

Impact of London 2012 on volunteering

A concern was raised as to whether enough consideration was given to the provision of legacy opportunities to meet the number of volunteers involved in the Games. There were 70,000 Games Makers, 8,000 TLAs and a number of volunteers involved in local borough programmes. This was highlighted by the length of time it took to hand over the database which hosted the volunteers' information. The database only went out to tender in October 2012, with the handover to Sport England not taking place until March 2013 (UK Sport, 2013). The transfer therefore needs to be utilised quickly to try and build on any 'after-glow' that may remain. It would be useful if the legacy partners could have access to use this information to encourage people to continue to volunteer. Join In was very keen to use legacy as an opportunity to share 'learning and intelligence'.

Two organisations also raise the issue of funding. NCVO highlights that the volunteering programme for the Games was so successful because of a number of factors which not only included the inspirational leadership from LOCOG but the huge financial investment in training, management and support of the volunteers.

The Spirit of London 2012 Trust has been set up to fund legacy projects following the Games and they recognise the importance of capturing that spirit that was so clearly seen during the Games. There was recognition that there has been a great deal of focus on event volunteering and that their organisation was keen to explore the needs of the communities, providing the 'glue' to bring the volunteers and the issues faced by the communities together.

From the interviews there was agreement that the raised profile of volunteering needed to be capitalised on. The other two main continuous themes identified were had it led to encouraging event volunteering and where does formal regular volunteering now fit in.

Impact of legacy on volunteering in London

Volunteering legacy has been determined at different stages both pre and post London 2012. In the joint UK Government and Mayor of London report (Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2013) a range of initiatives were detailed.

To successfully deliver legacy will require investment but where will that investment come from. Nichols and Ralston (2012) within their report, cite a list of lessons learnt about delivering legacy after a major sporting event. There was recognition that the event becomes the priority to deliver. London 2012 had developed a legacy plan but was the funding for that legacy plan thought through to capitalise on the enthusiasm for volunteering post London 2012? Spirit of 2012 Trust was set up by funds endowed from the sale of the Olympic village. The Big Lottery also provided funds for early investments to organisations such as Join In, Sustrans and Get Set. It seems that funds are going to new legacy projects and those encouraging event and episodic volunteering and not to supporting existing volunteer infrastructure which were involved in supporting the various volunteering programmes of the Games. As reported by GLV, 'people are judging whether legacy is happening from the perspective of as a new organisation, so naturally they are going to see a benefit'.

The findings revealed that the levels of volunteering for London have increased. However, it is the legacy plan for volunteering that will determine if this increase is sustainable or will indeed grow and

whether it will be aimed at event volunteering or provide a balanced approach between episodic volunteering and regular formal volunteering.

There is general consensus amongst the partners that investment was required to ensure legacy on volunteering was delivered. Both Join In and Team London involved in actively promoting events have stated that involving people in volunteering opportunities in their communities/sports clubs is part of their organisation's legacy for volunteering over the next three to five years.

Team London sees volunteering as a route to employment, again particularly for young people. The reality is to enable this, would require the support of a range of regular formal volunteering opportunities. The two infrastructure organisations have seen their members deal with the development of regular formal volunteering opportunities, as detailed with GLV reporting 14,294 opportunities across London⁵. There is recognition of the key part this form of volunteering plays, particularly in helping people secure employment and improve health and well-being, which are identified legacy themes for two of the interviewed organisations.

The legacy partners could also work closer together to ensure these legacy objectives can be achieved, particularly in involving new people as volunteers. From the interviews it can be seen that this is starting to happen but further work and investment is required to capitalise on the benefits that could be achieved, which would include delivery on legacy for volunteering. This would also ensure a reduction in the risk of duplication of services and build on existing structures, providing a co-ordinated and coherent approach.

Conclusions

The levels of formal and informal volunteering had increased post London 2012. Levels had peaked in 2005, most likely associated with the activities of the Year of the Volunteer, but subsequently figures had steadily decreased until 2011. The Community Life Survey 2012-13, (Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2013), identified an increase of 10% in formal regular volunteering in London. The report highlighted that the increase could be attributed to the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The study undertaken with volunteer centres identified an increase in the number of registered volunteers by 5% from 2012 to 2013.

The main finding from the figures gathered by the research was an identified increase in volunteering but will that be sustainable or indeed continue to grow. Capitalising on the euphoria of the Games was crucial and although this research has identified an increase in volunteering, it also highlights the need for further research to identify the progress of the legacy plan and the impact on volunteering over the next two years. To highlight this the latest figures from the community life survey 2013-14 have just been released reporting a decline in formal volunteering at least one a year from 44% to 41% and at least once a month from 29% to 27% (Great Britain. Cabinet Office, 2014).

One consistent theme that arose from the study, conducted with five key infrastructure or legacy partner organisations was to support the volunteer programmes associated with the Games required investment. Therefore to achieve a legacy for volunteering will require investment, to ensure resources are available to provide leadership and management skills and support infrastructure.

⁵ Figures taken from a presentation given by GLV at the Big Network Volunteering Event 2013

Both the literature review and the empirical research identified that the profile of volunteering had increased significantly since London 2012, especially through the media interest. However, has this increased the profile of event and episodic volunteering as opposed to an interest in volunteering generally? There is a place for all types of volunteering as identified in the literature review. The mixture of both the requirements of collective and reflexive volunteers was summarised by Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003, p. 5) as providing 'ingredients blended together into a personal volunteer cocktail'. The development of one-off, micro and virtual volunteering roles supports the flexibility required to achieve this cocktail. The research highlights in the aftermath of the Games there has been a swing into one off and event volunteering and questions what could be the long-term impact on the voluntary environment. A balance of roles is required to ensure the volunteers' needs are met but also the services and needs of the community are addressed and supported.

This has been recognised by the legacy partners who want to build on the enthusiasm from the Games by addressing the needs of the community and engaging new people into volunteering. All the organisations interviewed reported that this would require investment and relevant structures in place to support these volunteering roles. Better partnership working by sharing intelligence could also support the volunteering legacy for London.

To summarise, this research aimed to assess the impact on volunteering in London following the hosting of London 2012. The results demonstrated an increase in the levels of volunteering in London and the raising of the profile of volunteering. To ascertain the true legacy for volunteering would require further research to determine if this momentum can be sustained or developed further. It would include how investment could be incorporated to ensure formal regular volunteering opportunities are supported and promoted, sustaining the delivery of key services within communities, whilst allowing flexibility to incorporate the needs of the volunteers.

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