

# A Lasting Impact?

## Tracing the Volunteer Legacy of UK Events

June 2025

Tamsin Cox and Kate Rodenhurst



# ACCESS INFORMATION



Photo: Birmingham Festival volunteers. Credit: Verity Milligan



Photo: Hull 2017 volunteers. Credit: Leo Francis



Photo: Team London Young Ambassadors, GLA. Credit: Tom Simpson



Photo: MCRactive volunteers. Credit: Manchester City Council



Photo: Rugby League World Cup 2021 volunteer. Credit: Rugby Football League

# Contents

	Executive Summary	1
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Research questions and methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	Research questions	7
2.2	Methodology	10
<b>3</b>	<b>How events impact on the volunteering infrastructure</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1	Event infrastructure	14
3.1.1	Negotiation between volunteer programmes and events	17
3.1.2	Engagement with the existing local and national volunteering context	18
3.2	Post-event infrastructure	19
3.2.1	What volunteering legacies are being sought?	19
3.2.2	What structures are in place to support those legacies?	21
<b>4</b>	<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1	London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games	29
4.2	Manchester volunteer city	34
4.3	Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games	36
4.4	Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games	41
4.5	Rugby League World Cup 2021	45
4.6	Derry City of Culture 2013	47
4.7	Hull UK City of Culture 2017	50
<b>5</b>	<b>What helps or hinders infrastructural legacy?</b>	<b>54</b>
5.1	Purpose and planning	59
5.2	Structures and decision-making	61
5.3	Volunteer Management	63
5.4	Knowledge and learning	65
5.5	Policy and funding	67
5.6	Impact of COVID-19	69
<b>6</b>	<b>Key learning and recommendations</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>77</b>

# Executive Summary

Spirit of 2012 commissioned DHA to undertake a study looking at how events have worked, or could have worked, to strengthen the volunteering infrastructure. This study examines several key UK events to assess what happened to volunteer programmes after the event finished, based on what we know and where evidence exists, and identifies useful learning and recommendations for those planning events with volunteer programmes in the future, including those with stakeholders from the wider voluntary sector.

The report includes seven detailed case studies, focusing on a range of sports and cultural events. Referencing these, and a wider range of events, the study examines:

- How volunteering infrastructure is created for events and what elements of it are retained, relocated or retracted after the event is over.
- What post-event infrastructure looks like and what kinds of legacies can be enabled by places and governing bodies.
- What helps or hinders infrastructural legacy, including the impacts of: purpose and planning of volunteer programmes; structures and decision-making; volunteer management approaches; the role of knowledge and learning; policy and funding; and the impact of COVID-19 related disruption.

We found that events typically begin by creating new, temporary infrastructure to run event volunteer programmes. This new infrastructure is often housed within a larger, temporary vehicle which has been set up to ‘deliver’ the event. The new volunteering infrastructure’s capacities generally include: people required to run volunteer programmes; systems and processes which are established to support volunteer management; and an accumulation of knowledge and learning about what is required to run those volunteer programmes.

A key job for this new infrastructure is the process of negotiation with the event about the shape and style of volunteer opportunities and experiences. Generally, this negotiation involves some degree of challenge or tension between the objectives of the event itself, and the objectives of the volunteer programme.



Another crucial interaction for this new volunteering infrastructure is its engagement with the local and national volunteering context, including the existing infrastructure. Where this engagement is meaningful, evidence shows that local infrastructure can help support volunteer recruitment and training as well as encourage good practice in designing volunteer opportunities and volunteer management. National infrastructure can help temporary delivery vehicles to make local connections quickly and build partnerships. Specialist infrastructure, bringing knowledge of volunteer practice and/or the needs of specific groups, can be crucial in enabling volunteer programme to work with communities, including those who may not normally be involved in event volunteer programmes.

Where host places or governing bodies seek legacy from their volunteer programmes, this is often in the form of ongoing volunteering opportunities and journeys. The most common type of legacy identified was ongoing provision of event volunteer and city welcome/hosting opportunities. Whilst some places succeeded in retaining a significant part of the infrastructure that was set up to run the event volunteer programme, in some cases what has been retained is quite minimal. A key challenge identified is that there is often (not always) a gap between the expectations of the impact and legacy of event volunteer programmes, and what they are able to achieve.

A graphic at the bottom of the page shows the silhouettes of four people of different heights and builds, holding hands in a line. They are facing right, and their shadows are cast onto a light gray background. The silhouettes are dark gray, and the overall image conveys a sense of community and shared purpose.

Where host places or governing bodies seek legacy from their volunteer programmes, this is often in the form of ongoing volunteering opportunities and journeys. The most common type of legacy identified was ongoing provision of event volunteer and city welcome/hosting opportunities. Whilst some places succeeded in retaining a significant part of the infrastructure that was set up to run the event volunteer programme, in some cases what has been retained is quite minimal. A key challenge identified is that there is often (not always) a gap between the expectations of the impact and legacy of event volunteer programmes, and what they are able to achieve.



Nonetheless, the key infrastructural legacy of event volunteer programmes is that **places and governing bodies strengthen their capacity – in terms of people, systems and processes, and knowledge and learning – to run more event volunteer programmes, including city welcome programmes, in the future**, and to improve and refine those programmes each time.

This study makes five recommendations for future event volunteer programmes. These recommendations are relevant to those bidding and planning for events, local and national stakeholders (including funders and policymakers), and local and national volunteering infrastructure organisations.

## 1

### **Recommendation 1: Be clear and realistic about the objectives of event volunteer programmes**

Across the events reviewed, the most common issue is that event volunteer programmes do not reach the range of volunteers that stakeholders hope they will. There are excellent examples of events designing specific elements of their volunteer programme to engage with volunteers from groups which may not typically get involved through open recruitment. These examples are carefully planned, involve specialist partners from the volunteering infrastructure, and are appropriately resourced.

**Where those bidding for and planning for events with volunteer programmes have ambitions to engage specific groups, or a wider range of participants, they must plan to do so deliberately and realistically.**

## 2

### **Recommendation 2: Build on existing knowledge and capacity**

Whilst there is evidence of formal and informal knowledge exchange between events, there is also evidence of events not building substantially on learning from other events. **Those bidding for and planning for events must take the time to learn what has and hasn't worked for previous event volunteer programmes.**

In areas where there is substantial local volunteering infrastructure, or in events where national governing bodies, NGOs or other national volunteering infrastructure organisations have relevant knowledge, expertise and agendas, it is **crucial that those designing and planning for event volunteer programmes bring this knowledge and capacity to the table.**

## 3

### **Recommendation 3: Plan for legacy, including its delivery model or approach**

A crucial issue across almost all the events was the absence of detailed planning for legacy outcomes. **The proposition for legacy must be feasible, given the planned volunteer programme.**

Beyond this, there were several examples in which it was unclear in the planning stages who would be responsible for legacy and how it would be funded. **Early event bidding and planning discussions must include determinations about who is able to take responsibility for legacy and who is able to fund that legacy.**

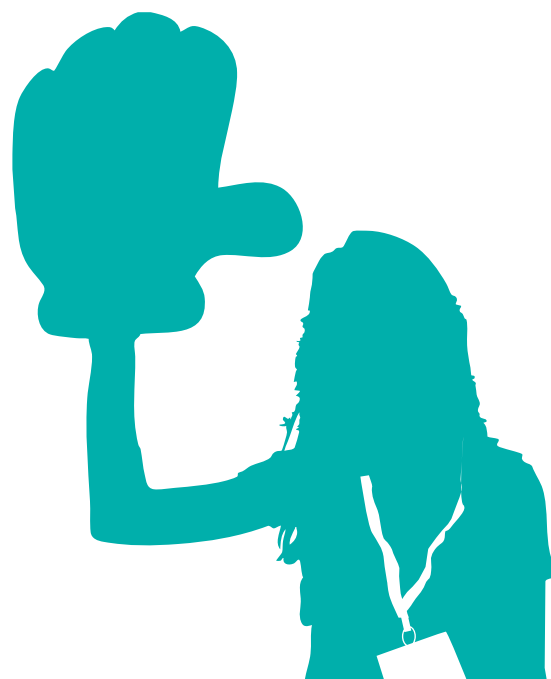
There are some excellent examples of event volunteer programmes that worked very hard to place emphasis on the quality of the volunteer opportunity and experience, and ensured that the volunteer management reflects best practice. This was, however, not the case for all event volunteer programmes. When we think about how infrastructure can be strengthened by event volunteer programmes, an element of that strengthening is the quality of the volunteer opportunity and management practice that event volunteer programmes can demonstrate, and the potential for this good practice to become established as standard in future volunteering programmes.

Given the range of stakeholders involved and profile of these volunteer programmes, **funders and policymakers should place emphasis on ensuring that event volunteer programmes reflect best volunteering practice.** The existing local and national volunteering infrastructure has a crucial role to play in enabling this and in supporting the UK to be an international exemplar in event volunteering.

In the course of this study, we have found it challenging to reconstruct learning from past events. Websites were not maintained, temporary delivery or legacy vehicles were closed, staff have moved on. Some programmes were never evaluated at all, or in detail, and few evaluations include any longitudinal element. Those who deliver volunteer programmes, and who are involved in delivery of volunteer legacy, learn a lot about how to do this effectively, and in some cases they take this rich learning on to subsequent roles in volunteer management; but this learning is dependent on individual staff members.

**There is a clear need to encourage better formal evaluation and learning and to ensure that it can be available beyond the end of temporary infrastructures.** Policymakers and funders engaged in supporting events should be advocating strongly for the former; but, at present, it is not clear who might be able to fulfil the latter responsibility.

This study brings together a range of learning from cultural and sporting events which have taken place in the UK and would not have been possible without the generous contributions of interviewees and those who shared evaluations and other material with us. The hope is that this report brings to light helpful learning from across a range of events. It is underpinned by more detailed reflections and knowledge, and ongoing practice in a range of locations, and readers are encouraged to use this report as a stepping stone to access the deeper learning that places, stakeholders and evaluation reports can offer.



# 1. Introduction



# 1. Introduction

In May 2024, DHA were commissioned by Spirit of 2012 to undertake a study looking at how events have worked, or could have worked, to strengthen the volunteering infrastructure. This study examines several key events to assess what happened, what is known and where evidence exists, and what recommendations or learning there can be for those planning events with volunteer programmes in the future, including with stakeholders from the wider volunteering sector.

In chapter 2, this report sets out the research questions we used for the study, how it set about finding out what happened in event volunteer programmes, and what was their legacy. Those findings are set out across three chapters.

- Chapter 3: an analysis of how volunteering infrastructure is constructed for event volunteer programmes, what common routes exist for retaining, relocating or retracting that infrastructure, and how that infrastructure interacts with other parts of the existing volunteering infrastructure. This brings together common models and approaches and examine some of the factors which underpin those choices.
- Chapter 4: a series of case studies, focusing on events where several interviewees were accessible and some supporting evaluations or other documentation. These case studies examine what is known about how events ran their volunteer programmes, what happened afterwards – particularly in terms of the volunteer management infrastructure – and how those programmes and their legacy engaged with any existing volunteering infrastructure.
- Chapter 5: an analysis of the key factors which help or hinder potential infrastructural legacy from event volunteer programmes. This section looks at the role of different elements, like the purpose of volunteer programmes, the structures used for event delivery, approaches to volunteer management, the role of knowledge and learning, and how policy and funding frames the way events are run.

Finally, this report concludes with key learning points and a series of recommendations. It is hoped that this report brings to light helpful learning from across a range of events. It is underpinned by more detailed reflections, knowledge and ongoing practice in a range of locations, and readers are encouraged to use it as a stepping stone to access the deeper learning that places, stakeholders and evaluation reports can offer.



## 2. Research questions and methodology



# 2. Research questions and methodology

## 2.1 Research questions

The main research question for this study was:

**How have events worked, or could they have worked, to strengthen the volunteering infrastructure?**

To aid the research design, DHA worked with Spirit of 2012 and broke down this substantial question into a series of practical questions about how events had approached event volunteer programmes, and particularly the legacy of those programmes. These questions were:

1	Was there an intention to provide a legacy for volunteers?
2	What plans were in place for a legacy for volunteers, what resources were allocated/available to support them, and who owns/owned them?
3	What plans were in place for the volunteering infrastructure post-event and who owns/owned them?
4	What routes were provided for volunteers post-event, and what evidence was there of ongoing volunteering by those cohorts?
5	What evidence was there of other changes to, and learning across, the volunteering infrastructure (for example, improved knowledge of volunteer motivations and outcomes, sharing learning on how to address barriers which prevent people from volunteering, etc.)?
6	What has been learned about the success factors and barriers which either support or prevent volunteers from continuing to engage post-event?



Key to this study has been our understanding of the term infrastructure. A study that looks at the volunteering infrastructure legacy of two editions of the Olympic Games defines the volunteering infrastructure as:

the organisations and programmes in place to promote, support and manage volunteering; including volunteering peak bodies, volunteer resource centres, national governing bodies of sport, community organisations and local government. (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016: 5).

Beyond this definition, it was found helpful to also consider:

- National government engagement with volunteering, including strategies and initiatives.
- Funding and support for volunteering activities, from trusts and foundations and other sources.
- Intelligence about, resources for, and co-ordination of volunteering activities and opportunities.
- Technology and technological infrastructure for working with volunteers and any data protection/sharing related issues and requirements.
- The extent of cross-sectoral networks and partnerships between volunteering support organisations (such as local CVS), culture, sport and other community organisations
- Volunteer managers and their skills, systems and processes.
- The range and relevance of opportunities provided, and whether these meet the needs and interests of volunteers.



## 2.2 Methodology

The project commenced in May 2024, and began with a rapid desk review and initial mapping of key events. This process enabled identification of which events may have sought to plan for significant legacy from their volunteer programmes, and which events could provide access suitable interviewees and evaluations or other documentation. There are, therefore, events we considered (e.g. Unboxed) which ultimately involved volunteers, but not via a central programme, and without any specific legacy planning for volunteers at the level of the overall event.

Following this initial mapping, a shortlist of events was agreed with Spirit of 2012, seeking a balance of:

- Sports events, including multi-sport and single sport events.
- Cultural events.

In addition, it was agreed to look at some repeated events (e.g. annual or bi-annual festivals) to understand any potential commonalities or useful learning which might be relevant.

This shortlist of events was explored using:

1. In-depth, semi-structured, one-to-one, or occasionally small group, interviews.
2. A detailed review of any evaluation or relevant documentation.

Where initial interviews and desk review suggested the prospect of significant learning about event volunteer programmes, additional interviewees were sought from amongst wider stakeholders to provide a broader perspective and an understanding of how the existing infrastructure engaged with event volunteer programmes, including:

- The local volunteering infrastructure.
- The national volunteering infrastructure.
- Local government.
- Other key local stakeholders.

Interviews were undertaken from July 2024 and were completed in January 2025.

This process enabled identification of seven substantive case studies and to learn about a wider number of events in some detail. Beyond the case studies, interviews and documentary material were reviewed using the research questions set out in section 2.1. and reflected upon the extended definition of volunteering infrastructure.

Figure 1 lists the events which we sought to survey and understand for this study, and identifies those which are the subject of detailed case studies. It also sets out the shortened reference term for each event which appears in this report.

Figure 1: Events explored in this study

Event	Shortened report reference	Full case study
<b>Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games</b>	Birmingham 2022	Yes
<b>Bradford UK City of Culture 2025</b>	Bradford 2025	
<b>Coventry UK City of Culture 2021</b>	Coventry 2021	
<b>Derry UK City of Culture 2013</b>	Derry 2013	Yes
<b>Festivals Edinburgh</b>	N/a	
<b>First World War Centenary Commemorations 1914-1918</b>	N/a	
<b>Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games</b>	Glasgow 2014	Yes
<b>Hull UK City of Culture 2017</b>	Hull 2017	Yes
<b>Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008</b>	Liverpool 2008	
<b>London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games</b>	London 2012	Yes
<b>London 2017 - World Para Athletics Championships and IAAF World Championships</b>	London 2017	
<b>Manchester International Festival/ Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 inheritance</b>	Manchester 2002/Manchester visitor city	Yes
<b>Norfolk and Norwich Festival</b>	Norfolk and Norwich Festival	
<b>Rugby League World Cup 2021</b>	RLWC 2021	Yes
<b>UEFA Women's Euros 2022</b>	Women's Euros 2022	
<b>Unboxed</b>	Unboxed	



The next chapter of this report sets out what is known about how volunteering infrastructures were set up to support event volunteer programmes and what happened to those infrastructures after the event was over.



AUDIO  
DESCRIPTION  
TOUR

AD  
AUDIO  
DESCRIPTION

VOLUNTEERS  
COLLECTIVE

VOLUNTEER

# 3. How events impact on the volunteering infrastructure



# 3. How events impact on the volunteering infrastructure

This study looks at if and how event volunteer programmes impact upon and strengthen the volunteering infrastructure. One of the key things apparent from the case studies (see chapter 4), and from the wider survey of event volunteering programmes, is that **events typically begin by creating new, temporary infrastructure in order to run the volunteering programme**. Usually, that infrastructure sits within a larger, event delivery vehicle.

Given the widespread nature of this approach, this chapter begins by setting out what the capacities of this new, temporary infrastructure typically are. It examines:

- What we mean by infrastructure in this context.
- How we can understand the relationship between the infrastructure, the wider event and the actual volunteer programme.
- What we know about how that new, temporary infrastructure interacts with existing local and national volunteering infrastructure.

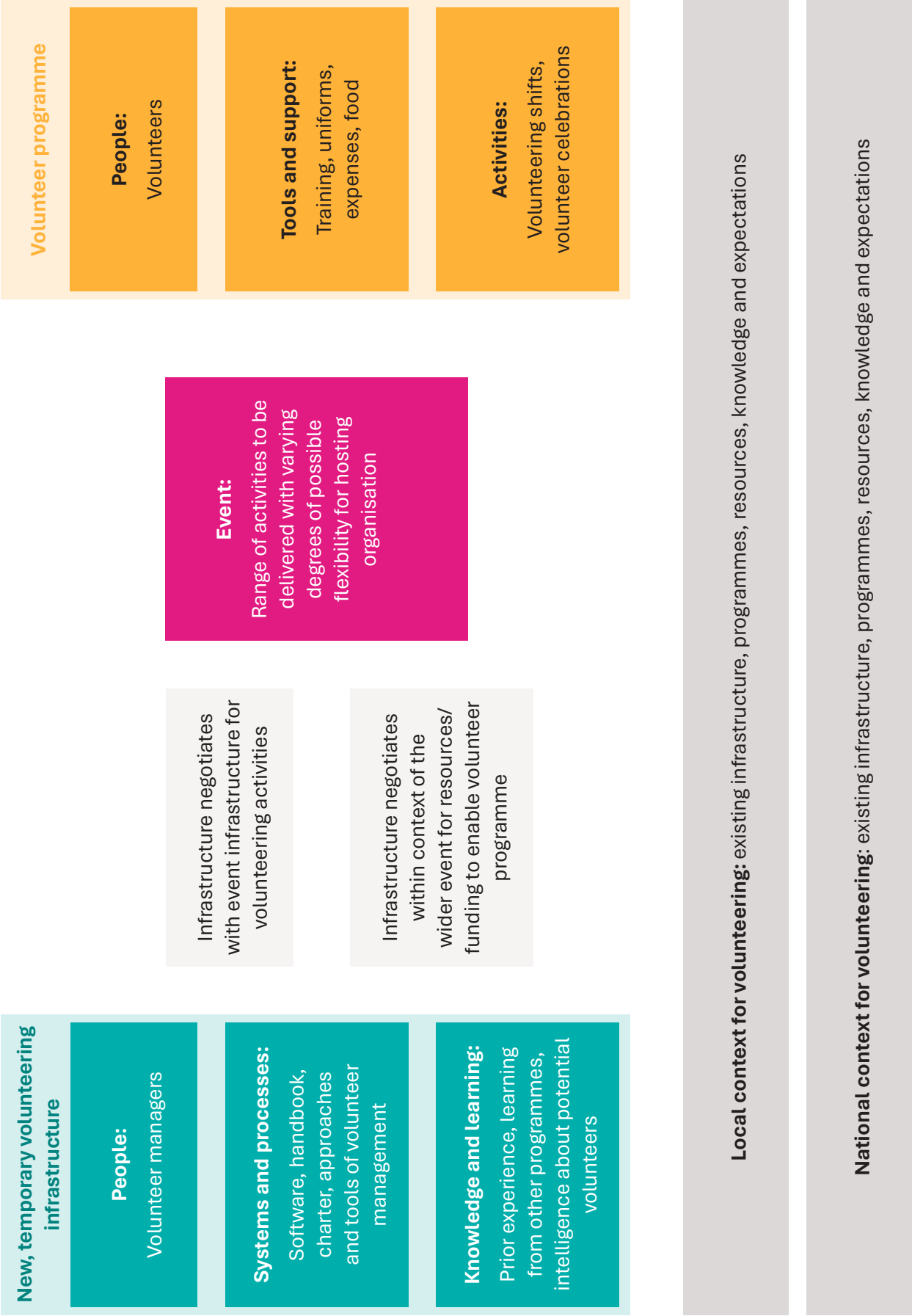
This chapter then goes on to explore the different post-legacy routes for this infrastructure. It sets out the volunteering legacies that event delivery organisations, places and other stakeholders are typically seeking from event volunteer programmes. It then looks at how these legacies translate into relocation, retention or retraction of that temporary infrastructure set up for delivering the event volunteer programmes.

## 3.1 Event infrastructure

The model in Figure 2 sets out the key elements that are typically included in new, temporary infrastructures, which are established to deliver volunteer event programmes. Key elements of this model are:

- The assets and capacities required within the infrastructure, including:
  - The people required to run volunteer programmes.
  - The systems and processes which have to be established.
  - The knowledge and learning required and produced about how volunteer programmes should run, and what a good volunteer programme is.
- The process of positioning and negotiation with the wider infrastructure that is developing and delivering the event.
- The volunteer programme itself, which emerges as a result of this negotiation, including:
  - The volunteers who are recruited, trained and contribute their time and skills.
  - The tools and support developed for the programme, including training, uniforms and provision for expenses or benefits.
  - The activities that the volunteers undertake.
- The local and national context for volunteering, including the existing volunteer infrastructure.

Figure 2: Model of temporary event volunteer programme infrastructure and its relationship to events and programmes



Typically, in this study it was found that the infrastructure outlined above is set up from scratch for an event. It is located in one of four larger organisations or delivery vehicles:

1. Within the organising committee or time-limited organisation set up to deliver the event.
2. Within the national governing body that is responsible for delivering the event.
3. Within the local government organisation or organisation adjacent to local government for the place in which the event(s) is being delivered.
4. Within an existing volunteering infrastructure organisation.

Where there are more than one volunteer programmes associated with an event, there may be more than one new, temporary volunteering infrastructure set up and they may be located in different organisations or delivery vehicles.

The least common of these is that the infrastructure for the volunteer programme is set up within an existing volunteering infrastructure organisation; in the case studies, only one example of this was found in Derry 2013 (see case study in section 4.6 of this report).<sup>1</sup>

Where the infrastructure is set up within a local government organisation, this typically reflects examples where more than one volunteer programme is associated with a major event (this may be different where smaller-scale events are being hosted). In these instances, local government organisations (or adjacent organisations) may run volunteer programmes which focus on ‘hosting’ the many visitors who travel to the event, providing a friendly welcome in city/town centres, for example; these programmes are often referred to as ‘host city volunteers’ or by a similar phrase. These programmes complement volunteer programmes that are then run by either the organising committee or organisation set up to host the event, or the national governing body, which focus on volunteer opportunities to ‘deliver’ the event, e.g. within and immediately outside sports facilities, enabling travel to and from facilities and so forth.

Two of the case studies – London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 – include examples of these parallel volunteer programmes, where one volunteer programme is based in the temporary delivery organisation and the other is based within a local government organisation or adjacent organisation. It is worth noting that the presence of a parallel host city volunteer programme in Glasgow reflects the challenges of ‘negotiating’ with the event around the planning for the volunteer programme run by the organising committee. Birmingham 2022 demonstrates an alternative approach, running multiple volunteer roles, including a host city programme within one unified team, from the same infrastructure within the temporary delivery organisation.

---

<sup>1</sup> See figure 1 on page 11 for a list of all events included in this study, the shortened reference name which is used throughout the study and which events are the subject of detailed case studies.

Programmes run by the temporary delivery organisation or the national governing body are sometimes run in partnership with local government events teams; but, for major events, they are more typically run solely by those dedicated organisations or national governing bodies.

Much of the learning from the case studies set out in chapter 4 demonstrates two key areas of challenge and variation between different events:

1. The basis on which a new, temporary volunteering infrastructure is able to negotiate with the event for volunteer opportunities and experience.
2. The way in which the new, temporary volunteering infrastructure interacts with the existing local and national volunteering context.

The following two sub-sections of this report discuss the different examples of these challenges and opportunities which have been identified through this study.

### **3.1.1 Negotiation between volunteer programmes and events**

In interviews for this study, many designing and running volunteer programmes told of this challenge of negotiating around the priorities and needs of a volunteer programme within the context of an overall event that may have other drivers.

Where events have multiple volunteer programmes, and particularly where there are parts of the volunteer programme that have broader focus (e.g. city welcome), one of the key differences is that they are not required to engage so much, or at all, with the ‘event’ to negotiate space for their programme.

Some events do not have a ‘franchise’ element, or are less prescriptive, than others: for example, there is a significant difference between a UK Capital of Culture event, which is largely determined by the winning host city, and hosting the Commonwealth Games, where host cities must take onboard a wide range of specific requirements about how the event(s) must operate.<sup>2</sup> These differences considerably alter the grounds on which negotiation between volunteer infrastructure and the wider event infrastructure can take place, though the necessity for negotiation still exists for events where greater local determination is a feature.

---

<sup>2</sup>This is, of course, typically a key difference between sports events and other kinds of events.

### 3.1.2 Engagement with the existing local and national volunteering context

As noted previously, only one example was found where the volunteer programme was run from within the existing infrastructure (Derry 2013); notably, this required significant additional capacity and support for the existing infrastructure in order for it to run an event volunteer programme.

Beyond this, event volunteer programmes have varied in their engagement with existing infrastructure. There is evidence in some events of new volunteer infrastructure in temporary delivery organisations engaging only in a limited way with the existing infrastructure and failing to build on, or appreciate, the knowledge and capacities within the existing infrastructure (at local and national levels). It was also found that types of existing infrastructure with which event volunteer programmes do engage includes those that are volunteer-focused, such as a Volunteer Centre or voluntary sector support organisation, and other types of organisations which support or broker volunteering opportunities, such as a youth organisation.

Beyond the detailed case studies included in this study, we also looked at a Spirit of 2012 funded project run in partnership between Festivals Edinburgh and Volunteer Edinburgh, and the regular volunteering programme at the Norfolk and Norwich Festival.



**The Edinburgh Festival City Volunteers project** worked over three years to run a volunteer programme welcoming visitors to Edinburgh in the Festivals period. In the latter two years, the programme focused particularly on working with smaller numbers of volunteers and involving a significant proportion of volunteers who had experienced barriers to inclusion (50%). Festivals Edinburgh recognised that neither they, nor the festivals themselves, had the knowledge or capacity to support volunteers with a range of needs and to deliver a meaningful volunteer experience. Volunteer Edinburgh were, therefore, a crucial partner in the project due to their expertise and knowledge in designing programmes for and supporting a wide range of volunteers and volunteering opportunities.



**Norfolk and Norwich Festival** are working in partnership with two local organisations. The first is a local college that supports volunteering opportunities for students who need additional support. The second is New Routes, an organisation supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, to enable individuals from those groups to access volunteering opportunities. Key to these partnerships is that those volunteers taking part in the programme are supported by organisations and staff who already know them and support them in other aspects of their lives.



Looking at these examples, and that of the Rugby League World Cup 2021's partnership with Community Integrated Care (see full case study in section 4.5), the significant value is evident of partnerships between events and the existing volunteering infrastructure in supporting particular groups of volunteers – often those who may not typically be included in event volunteer programmes – to be able to engage and take part in volunteering opportunities. Key to this is the recognition that specialist knowledge and capacity is required, and that this needs to feed into the design and delivery of the opportunities.

There is also evidence of better engagement and, in some cases, partnership working that has enhanced the quality and reach of volunteer programmes. In the host city volunteer programmes run by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and other local authorities as part of London 2012, and by local government organisations/adjacent organisations as part of Glasgow 2014, those organisations leading the volunteer programmes partnered with the existing volunteer infrastructure around programme design, recruitment, training and other elements of volunteer management.

There are also key roles for the national volunteering infrastructure, for example national funding organisations, including Spirit of 2012 (until its closure), the National Lottery family of funders and development organisations, such as arts councils and sports councils. In some cases, these organisations supply crucial funding for volunteer programmes, but they can also play a role in supporting event delivery organisations to think about what good volunteer programmes look like, in some cases performing a 'critical friend' role in enabling event teams to access specific expertise and understand good practice.

In addition, development organisations can play an important role in supporting delivery organisations to get to know what is happening locally and build the necessary contacts and partnerships for programmes to be genuinely place-based. This is particularly the case where a temporary delivery organisation is in place and many of the roles within it are likely to be filled by event management specialists who may not be locally networked.

## **3.2 Post-event infrastructure**

If the immediate impact of event volunteer programmes is a new, temporary infrastructure, the next question is: what happens after the event finishes? This section sets out some of the common approaches. It looks first at what kinds of legacies policy-makers and local stakeholders are seeking from volunteer programmes. It then goes on to explore what this means in terms of the resulting structures that remain, or are created after the event, to support those legacy ambitions.

### **3.2.1 What volunteering legacies are being sought?**

This study identified a number of ways in which event organisers, local authorities, stakeholders and volunteers themselves might envisage potential volunteering legacy from major events. These typically focus on changes to, or the extension of, volunteer take-up and/or behaviour.

These include:

- **Continued event volunteering in future events held in the place where the original event was hosted.** For example, Birmingham Commonwealth Games volunteers will be approached to volunteer during the 2027 Invictus Games. In Glasgow and Manchester, those who volunteered in the Commonwealth Games were contacted again for subsequent volunteering event opportunities in those cities. In Liverpool, following the 2008 European Capital of Culture, the Culture Liverpool team continues to run volunteer programmes alongside major events, including sports events and the Eurovision Song Contest 2023.
- **Continued event volunteering in future events held in other places.** It is evident from data on volunteers' previous event experiences and post-event volunteering plans that some travel significantly for major international events.
- **Continued event and/or host city volunteering as part of an ongoing place-based programme of volunteering** that retains an overall brand for the programme, retains some volunteers from the original event volunteer programme, but also allows for new volunteers to be recruited. The legacy for Hull 2017 fits into this category and there are other examples of programmes that retain a strong brand, volunteer management approach and some degree of ongoing activity (e.g. Team London at GLA).
- **Transition from event volunteering to other general forms of local volunteering,** which are motivated by an enhanced sense of local pride and community. For example, Derry 2013 volunteers have accessed other opportunities via the Volunteer Centre; Glasgow's work in seeking to signpost host city volunteers on to other community-based opportunities; and the initial post-event phase of the Hull 2017 volunteer programme, where a wider range of volunteer opportunities was explored.
- **Transition from event volunteering to further volunteering in culture or sport.** For example, volunteers have reported going from City of Culture volunteering to regular volunteering in a local museum in Derry; from volunteering in the Women's Euros to volunteering with a girls' football team; from volunteering at London 2012 to being inspired and connected through Join In to volunteer at a grassroots sports club. In the case of the Inspiration programme run by England Athletics (known as 'Team Personal Best') as part of the World Championships in Athletics 2017, subsequent volunteer development activities improved the quality of volunteer experience for existing volunteers in grassroots athletics and created opportunities for those inspired by the Championships to come into grassroots athletics volunteering (England Athletics, No date).
- **Legacy in the form of movement into employment, training or other positive outcomes beyond volunteering.** A number of the events considered by this study included specific parts of the volunteer programme aimed at young people, or those looking to develop their skills and experience to support future employability.



- **Raising awareness of volunteering and inspiring others into volunteering.** This aspiration is the least well-defined in the case studies and event volunteer programme examples within this study. Event volunteer programmes work hard to make their volunteers visible – with uniforms, press coverage and volunteer events – in part to add to the sense of welcome and organisation around events, but also to raise awareness of volunteering programmes and celebrate them. There is also evidence of implicit aspirations that event volunteer programmes might encourage wider behavioural change, usually amongst the local population. Join In, the legacy volunteer infrastructure from London 2012, is interesting to consider through this lens, as it actively sought to reignite the awareness of volunteering and celebratory nature of London 2012 through connecting the stories of London 2012 athletes to their grassroots beginnings, and to capitalise on the potential for an event and its volunteering programme to have a wider, inspirational effect on volunteering legacies.

Underpinning several of these aspirations is the hope that event volunteer programmes will have engaged volunteers from groups who may face barriers to volunteering, or who typically are not motivated to volunteer. The idea is to develop or expand volunteering cohorts in these different areas and to ensure those cohorts are diverse.

There is currently significant variance in the extent to which event organisers and other stakeholders clearly understand and plan for the type of legacy volunteering they hope to see after the event, and whether they structure the volunteering experience to enhance the likelihood of volunteers taking a particular route. Some actual legacy outcomes do not reflect what event organisers and local stakeholders planned for, but rather what feels possible post-event.

The next section goes on to explore what kinds of structures – or infrastructure – are put in place post-event to carry these legacies forward.

### 3.2.2 What structures are in place to support those legacies?

Earlier in this chapter, it was identified that events typically establish new infrastructure – that may sit within a wider structure, such as a temporary delivery vehicle – in order to run event volunteer programmes. This section sets out what kinds of structures and capacities are retained or set-up to support the legacies for volunteer programmes, which host areas and stakeholders seek post-event (as set out in section 3.2.1).



## Route 1: New infrastructure relocated and/or retained

On the whole, the infrastructure created for a volunteering programme in an event is temporary. In a practical sense, this means fixed-term contracts for the people who run it and time-limited funding for personnel and other running costs. Additionally, the event itself which prompted the programme has finished.

In some instances, the new infrastructure created to run a volunteer programme is either relocated (in the case of Hull 2017 and Birmingham 2022) or retained in some way (in the cases of Team London at the GLA). In these instances, an element of ongoing activity provides the basis for a regular volunteer programme which may be year-round, or seasonally focused, e.g. annual cultural events, tourist information points. In these cases, systems and processes continue to be used, there is some evidence of continuity in the personnel, and there is evidence of building on knowledge and learning from the event period. Crucially, a relationship is maintained with the volunteer cohort beyond brokering or occasional signposting.



**A more unique example is the legacy of the volunteer programme from Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008.** In 2008, the Liverpool ONE retail and entertainment open-air complex opened in Liverpool city centre. The complex is one of the largest in Europe and includes a range of spaces that are animated by temporary installations and activities across the year. The space forms an intersection between many popular parts of the city. The Liverpool ONE management organisation took on the volunteer cohort from Liverpool 2008 and provided a range of volunteer opportunities across the following year. Culture Liverpool, Liverpool City Council's culture and events team (which was ultimately relocated back into the council) were also able to draw on the volunteer cohort for subsequent event volunteer programmes. Following COVID-19 disruption, the volunteer co-ordinator role at Liverpool ONE was discontinued. Culture Liverpool continues to hold a database of volunteers that includes those who participated in the Liverpool 2008. Therefore, the city is able to use its significant experience of event volunteer programmes each time it designs and recruits for new volunteer cohorts when it hosts other events.

Where infrastructure is in place to run a range of ongoing activities, it can also be responsive to other opportunities. For example, after a city hosts a mega-event, it often seeks opportunities to host other events – these may be a bit smaller, but reflect its range of facilities and confidence in delivering events. In these instances, the infrastructure provides a useful route for commissioning or partnering to deliver volunteer programmes; for example, in Birmingham the infrastructure for the legacy volunteer programme, United by 2022, was commissioned to deliver the volunteer programme for the World Trampolining Championships in 2023.

Key differences between examples in this category include:

- Whether the organisation to which the infrastructure is relocated or retained is itself a permanent organisation (e.g. a local government organisation like Visit Hull and East Yorkshire based at Hull City Council in partnership with East Riding of Yorkshire; at the GLA; or within Manchester City Council), or within a temporary organisation like United by 2022.
- The second key issue is where the ongoing funding for programmes comes from and whether that is time limited. The HEY! Volunteering Programme in Hull receives significant support from the local government partners and grant funding from Spirit of 2012.<sup>3</sup> Birmingham has had a very tight window in which to spend its legacy funding from the 2022 Commonwealth Games and is now in the process of transitioning to an income generating model for its volunteer legacy programme.

Occasionally, there are examples of organising committees that have been named as the holder of legacy responsibilities for volunteering after events (e.g. Birmingham 2022). In some cases, organising committees identified that they could not be responsible for legacy (e.g. London 2012), but that no alternative was readily available in these planning phases. While this can be made to work (and was helped in Birmingham's case by key staff moving from roles on the organising team to roles in the legacy body), it is a problem for legacy to be in the hands of a temporary organisation.

Therefore, a crucial challenge for models that take across a regular programme of volunteering activities and volunteer cohorts (with the possibility of further recruitment/attrition) is whether there is an ongoing commitment to resourcing those programmes, and whether the organisation which effectively 'hosts' that infrastructure has long-term capacity and will to do so.

Arguably, this route provides the biggest impact on volunteering infrastructure, adding to the local volunteering infrastructure significantly with a new, potentially long-term capacity in terms of:

- People with significant volunteer management experience retained or recruited.
- Systems and processes carrying forward or building on the approaches used for the event volunteer programme.
- Knowledge and learning being retained through significant prior experience of running volunteer programmes. This knowledge can be built upon in the design of future opportunities and shared with the wider local volunteer infrastructure, other partners in the area and key stakeholders, to build the commitment for meaningful volunteering opportunities in the long-term.
- A resulting, regular programme of volunteer opportunities and cohort which is refreshed via recruitment/attrition from time to time.

---

<sup>3</sup>The Hull 2017 volunteer programme and its legacy have benefited significantly from an ongoing funding relationship with Spirit of 2012, which funded the programme for activities in 2017, for the initial legacy activities through Absolutely Cultured and latterly for the current programme as HEY! Volunteers.

### **Route 2: New infrastructure partially relocated or retained for use on an event-by-event basis**

In other cases, it was found a more partial retention of the new infrastructure, or a hybrid of route one and route two. Where local government organisations are involved in bidding for and hosting a series of major events – e.g. London, Glasgow and Liverpool – they can confidently plan to run volunteer programmes alongside those events. In some cases, there is significant continuity of people with staff retained over extended periods of time, ensuring some retention of useful knowledge and learning about what a good volunteer programme looks like. This people capacity is sometimes a minimal resource and additional volunteer management staff are brought in on an event-by-event basis.

Volunteer managers build on the systems and processes they have from previous events, but these are often subject to the terms of the event, and they may not wholly ‘own’ the volunteer programme. When areas bid for events, and design their volunteer programmes, they are making use of the knowledge and learning from previous events. Whilst this repeated bidding and planning process ensures some formalisation of the learning, much of this knowledge and learning is retained within individuals who remain in key event management/volunteer management roles; this can make some of these approaches vulnerable to staff churn.

Crucially, these models occur where local government organisations have retained some elements of the infrastructure. They also reflect a local commitment – from a range of stakeholders – to including volunteering in events. The resources for the volunteer programmes reflect what can be assigned from overall event budgets and so vary from event to event.

This approach reflects an additional infrastructure that is re-established each time an event occurs, albeit building on previous knowledge and systems. It ensures that volunteer opportunities are built into events but may not provide volunteer opportunities beyond that. In some instances, where these event volunteering opportunities sit within a wider range of volunteering opportunities (supported by local government adjacent organisations or the wider voluntary and community sector) there is a collective, strategic sense of where event volunteering fits into a wider picture of meaningful volunteer experiences, e.g. Glasgow. In others, there is limited interaction with other parts of the volunteering infrastructure and no overall strategic vision for volunteering.

### **Route 3: New infrastructure partially relocated or retained to signpost and broker volunteers to other opportunities**

A different relocation or retention model is in evidence where there is a desire to ensure legacy that is not necessarily focused on one location. Elements of the volunteering infrastructure, including databases of volunteering, knowledge and learning, some systems and processes and potentially – where national governing bodies are concerned – some retention of people, may take place. The crucial shift is in the space in which the infrastructure is trying to support volunteers. In the case of London 2012 and the Join In legacy vehicle, or the Rugby League World Cup and the Rugby Football League legacy, the aim is to try and capture both the volunteers and the inspiration produced by the major event and convert it into volunteering at the grassroots level of sport.

What this means is that the volunteering infrastructure may no longer be running volunteering programmes, but rather brokering opportunities. Those potential volunteers who are motivated to try out opportunities like grassroots sports volunteering are then directed to those opportunities. In some instances, this may prove a route through which event volunteers are ‘converted’ into grassroots volunteers; however, part of the success of the Rugby League World Cup programme is that it included volunteering opportunities at grassroots sports clubs from the beginning. At present, there is a lack of good data on a meaningful ‘conversion’ rate of volunteers though there is useful learning from Sport England-commissioned research.<sup>4</sup> It may, in addition, be providing tools and support to those who are running volunteering opportunities.

#### **Route 4: Other infrastructural legacies**

There are a number of innovative examples of volunteering legacy arrangements across a range of events in which capacity that had been developed as part of event volunteer programme was retained or developed separately from the ongoing volunteer arrangements in a specific place. These included:

- Team Kinetic, a volunteer management software company based in Manchester, which emerged a number of years after the 2002 Commonwealth Games to provide a solution for managing the cohort of volunteers from the Games and the post-Games legacy project. They now support organisations across Manchester with software, training and management services.
- In Coventry, EnV was spun out as a social enterprise from the local university, which had taken on the lead role in organising local volunteers during the 2012 Olympics, including students. EnV then went on to deliver volunteer management services during Coventry’s year as City of Culture in 2021. EnV continues to operate on a smaller scale and managed volunteers for Coventry-based events during Birmingham 2022.
- Some legacy vehicles or programmes also generate useful research and intelligence about volunteering and, in some cases, valuable learning and tools for others engaging with volunteers (including community and grassroots organisations). Join In, the legacy vehicle from London 2012, produced research and advice on how to recruit and retain volunteers using insights from behavioural science (Fujiwara, Lawton et al., 2018). England Athletics ran a programme following the London 2017 World Athletics Championships that included research, piloted new volunteer engagement approaches and produced a range of useful tools and networks to help increase volunteer take-up and improve volunteer opportunities.

---

<sup>4</sup> Research commissioned by Sport England specifically explored ‘the appetite and feasibility for major sport event volunteers (and unsuccessful event applicants) to successfully transition from the event to community-level opportunities’. The research found that, at present, approximately 7% of people who volunteer at major events will go on to volunteer within community settings. It suggests a number of barriers (e.g. lack of awareness about opportunities) which could be addressed, but also argues that only a specific minority of major event volunteers are likely to be potential community volunteers, even if barriers are addressed (Goodform, 2019).



**England Athletics were funded by Spirit of 2012 to run a programme following the London 2017 World Athletics Championships.** The idea was that the Championships would prompt an upsurge in interest in volunteering at club level. The programme included research to understand the motivations of volunteers already supporting athletics and design for a project to increase volunteers and diversify the range of volunteers supporting clubs, e.g. including young people. The programme achieved increased capacity for clubs, increased volunteer satisfaction and levels of wellbeing, and helped England Athletics consolidate and articulate a range of key principles for good volunteer opportunities. Key infrastructural outcomes included the appointment of a dedicated volunteer manager at England Athletics for the programme and an internal group with a formal responsibility for shaping the strategy for volunteering.



**The next chapter of this report provides seven key case studies that look at a range of event volunteer programmes and their legacies, examining the different approaches set out in this chapter.**



Photo: London 2012 Team London Ambassadors, GLA. Credit: Justin Kase/Alamy

# 4. Case Studies



# 4. Case Studies

This chapter explores a series of case studies of events with significant volunteering programmes. It sets out what is known about the kind of infrastructure created, the legacy of that infrastructure and the relationship with the wider volunteering infrastructure. There was greater access to suitable interviewees or publicly-available evaluations and other documentation in some cases than in others, thus the level of detail varies across the case studies.



Photo: Hull 2017 volunteers. Credit: Leo Francis



## CASE STUDY

### 4.1 London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games



Photo: London 2012 Games Makers. Credit: Richard Baker/Alamy

The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is sometimes termed the first ‘legacy’ Olympics, reflecting the inclusion of legacy aspirations in the formal criteria for selecting host cities for the first time (Nedvetskaya and Girginov, 2017; Nichols, Ralston et al., 2017; Shipway, Lockstone-Binney et al., 2020). The bid for the Games hoped for a legacy of inspiring people to get involved in sport in their communities (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016: 22).

London 2012 had a formal volunteering programme, Games Makers, which involved 70,000 volunteers from an initial pool of 250,000 applicants. The programme was supported by a corporate sponsor for the Games (McDonald’s) and included opportunities for those in long-term unemployment (Nedvetskaya and Girginov, 2017) as well as some corporate volunteering. Volunteers could be involved in a wide range of roles and were supported with training and branded uniforms. There is some variance in the available literature about how many volunteers were ‘first time’ volunteers; survey data suggested around 20%, though other claims were made for a higher proportion of the Games Makers being first-time volunteers (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016). There is significant evidence of volunteers having a memorable and meaningful experience participating in the Games Makers programme. There is also criticism that the programme was strongly centred on the functional requirements of the events rather than the volunteer experience (e.g. Nedvetskaya and Girginov, 2017).

An Advisory Group, including members from the existing volunteer infrastructure, was formed to enable the organising committee and voluntary sector to work together. There is, however, evidence that voluntary sector organisations, national sporting organisations and other volunteering stakeholders felt that the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) engaged poorly. A study on the volunteer infrastructure legacy of London 2012 and Sydney 2000 found stakeholders felt that LOCOG was not well connected to the sector, not always interested in using existing sector routes to potential volunteers, and left contributors feeling exploited where it failed to recognise the value of freely given advice or connections (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016: 46-47).

In addition to the organising committee volunteer programme, two other types of volunteering programmes were run specifically to support the Games. Transport for London and National Rail both ran programmes for travel champions or ambassadors. There were also welcome ambassador volunteering programmes run by the Mayor of London and local authorities in areas that hosted parts of the Games (e.g. in Essex, which hosted canoeing and mountain biking, and Eton Dornay, which hosted rowing). These place-based ambassador programmes were aimed at local residents and typically involved placing volunteers at key tourism spots (e.g. airports, stations, tourist information centres) to provide a friendly welcome and local information. The largest of these programmes, Team London, involved around 8,000 volunteers who could access the same basic training as Games Makers and had an identity and uniform for volunteers which was also consistent with London 2012 branding.

The ambassador programmes also demonstrated a stronger relationship with local volunteering infrastructure; the Team London programme worked with volunteer centres to recruit volunteers, and there is evidence that this relationship was viewed positively by both parties (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016: 49-50). There is also some evidence that the ambassador programmes were able to offer more flexibility and choice to volunteers more so than the Games Makers programme and could be viewed as more 'volunteer-focused' (Nichols, Ralston et al., 2017: 18-19).

Although a connection was made between ambassador programmes and the Games Makers in 2012, responsibility for planning the legacy of these programmes remained separately with the hosting organisations. In the case of the Games Makers, legacy planning was affected in part by the way in which organising committees work and dislocations which take place between key stages of hosting: between bidding (often undertaken by local/domestic stakeholders) and delivery (at which point a new vehicle for delivery is set up and a significant number of people from outside the bidding process come in); and between delivery, which is the limit of the organising committee's remit, and any legacy arrangements.

For example, work was undertaken to draw up a potential legacy strategy that involved representatives from the voluntary sector and was presented to LOCOG, but not adopted because of the organising committee's remit (Nichols, Ralston et al., 2017). In addition to the question of responsibility for legacy, resources for legacy were also not part of pre-Games planning; there was no dedicated budget for 2012 legacy planning and sourcing funding post-event led to delays meaning that funding was typically time-limited (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016: 51-52).

A legacy vehicle for volunteering, Join In, was established in May 2012, supported by funding from the Big Lottery Fund (now National Lottery Community Fund) and the Cabinet Office (UK Government and Mayor of London, 2013). It effectively operated as a new piece of volunteer infrastructure, operating to raise the visibility and awareness of volunteers, and to recruit and retain volunteers for local sports clubs and other events, including the Tour de France Grand Depart and the Invictus Games.<sup>5</sup> It utilised and extended a range of assets from London 2012, including:

- The high profile and celebration of volunteers which the Games had achieved.
- The contacts database of ticketholders and volunteers (including some segmentation of volunteers), and other approaches and learning from the Games Makers programme.
- The profile of UK-based Olympians, using the stories of where they started out and the role of volunteers in grassroots sports to encourage new volunteers.

Join In undertook a range of work in partnership to raise the profile of volunteering, developed various resources to support community events and clubs in recruiting and supporting volunteers<sup>6</sup> and connected potential volunteers to grassroots volunteering opportunities, primarily with local sports clubs. Key to its approach was utilising what had been learnt about personalising volunteer opportunities, enabling flexibility and autonomy for individuals. It also commissioned research into the value of volunteering in sport using new and exploratory methods (Join In, No date) and into effective recruitment and retention of volunteers, including a useful set of principles for planning volunteer engagement (Fujiwara, Lawton et al., 2018).

Criticism of Join In as a legacy to the Games Makers typically focuses on whether there was too long a gap between the end of the Games Makers activities and the start of opportunities via Join In to properly capitalise on the potential momentum (for those who had participated as volunteers and more widely amongst the general public). This was particularly the case with the London 2012 volunteer database, for which there was a protracted delay in transferring and utilising it to re-contact volunteers. There was also some criticism of the focus of Join In on sports and events volunteering, some concern about whether volunteering at local sports clubs was something event volunteers (i.e. the Games Makers) were likely to be interested in, and some questions about whether the volunteer opportunities being sought from local sports clubs really reflected the needs of those clubs (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016: 26-28, 51).

Additionally, some interviewees suggested that part of the challenge at Join In was that the legacy was being worked out as they went along. Whilst London 2012 is sometimes termed the first legacy games, due to the inclusion of legacy plans in the bids, there was no blueprint for planning for legacy. The success of the Games Makers was not entirely expected. Therefore, Join In had not started with a clear sense of the volunteer journey between being a Games Maker and volunteering at a local sports club, so were discovering that as they sought to recruit and retain volunteers for those opportunities.

---

<sup>5</sup> The IOC-funded study on volunteering infrastructure legacy which examines London 2012 and Sydney 2000 argues that setting up Join In as a new piece of infrastructure gave the impression that the existing volunteering infrastructure was being overlooked (Lockstone-Binney, Holmes et al., 2016: 28)

<sup>6</sup> Some of which was completed by Sport England.

Join In existed until the beginning of the next Olympic cycle (2016) at which point the Sport and Recreation Alliance took over and still holds some key resources from Join In online. The Alliance advocates for sports volunteering; it existed prior to Join In, having been set up in 1935 as the Central Council of Recreative Physical Training. For a period of time, the Alliance signposted potential volunteers to a portal connecting volunteers with opportunities; this appeared to be live in 2020, but is no longer accessible. More recently, the Alliance has featured material on its website that celebrates the experiences of London 2012 volunteers.

Other volunteer programmes, particularly the ambassador programmes, were largely situated within local government structures. There was no dedicated legacy funding set aside for the ambassador programmes. The Team London Ambassadors programme engaged in legacy planning prior to 2012 and there is some evidence that other locations with ambassador programmes also planned, or at least hoped, for legacy (Nichols, Ralston et al., 2017: 15). Some local government organisations were able to retain the additional capacity (therefore knowledge and experience) they had employed to run their ambassador programmes. Team London provided an online service for volunteers to access opportunities that was re-launched in 2013. This enabled Team London to hold on to, and add to, their registered volunteers (Nichols, Ralston et al., 2017).

In the summer of 2013, Team London ran a visitor welcome programme that replicated the model it had used in the Games period with volunteers supporting tourists and visitors in six key locations across London over a six-week period in the summer. This has continued since then (with the exception of COVID-19 related interruptions). The GLA also runs a volunteering programme for major events hosted by London and a volunteer programme to respond to moments of crisis (e.g. COVID-19 or refugee influxes). Team London has also had a direct involvement in enabling volunteer programmes for other major events, e.g. running the volunteer programme for the London 2017 World Para Athletics Championships and IAAF World Championships (The Sports Consultancy, Nielsen Sports et al., No date).

Photo: 'Hidden diamonds. Uncovering the true value of sport volunteers.' Report front cover. Credit: Join In



There is some evidence of ambassador programmes, volunteer management capacity and/or responsibilities being maintained within some other local government organisations after London 2012. There is also, however, evidence of staff redeployment and churn as well as the significant impact of cuts to local government and the local volunteer infrastructure funding, which limited any potential legacy in a number of locations (Nichols, Ralston et al., 2017).

The GLA's volunteering programmes still have active volunteers who were involved in the Team London programme. Volunteers who have been part of Team London in subsequent years often become attached to particular locations and have built social connections and friends through that repeated engagement. The Mayor's Office has been working to make the volunteer pool more reflective of London's diversity and has made significant progress engaging more ethnically diverse (and representative) volunteers and more volunteers with disabilities. It has also been working to attract more young people to volunteer; an earlier iteration of this was the Team London Young Ambassadors programme, which Spirit of 2012 funded.

In addition, there is evidence of improvement in volunteer management and the overall volunteer experience, supported by learning from each year's programme of volunteering activities. The different elements of the programme sometimes attract different groups of volunteers, reflecting different motivations and capacities. In the period since 2012, the Mayor's Office has upgraded the online portal it uses for volunteering and seen the quality of solutions in this area improve. In addition, the policies and processes for supporting volunteers are reviewed and updated. Where the GLA is supporting a volunteering element in a bid, they provide a useful knowledge base. Building relationships with key events organisations, such as UEFA, also helps to ensure that there can be some collective learning and building upon previous experiences.

It is worth noting that the Spirit of 2012 itself is, arguably, a legacy for volunteering infrastructure from London 2012; its funding of volunteering activities, exploratory models and approaches, and programmes at key points of transition has been significant.

## Key lessons from London 2012



GLA's ongoing ambassadors programme is a direct legacy from London 2012 and has contributed to the knowledge, experience and range of volunteering programmes run by the GLA as a key part of the volunteering infrastructure in Greater London.

Both London 2012 and Join In gained significant impact in raising awareness of volunteers and the value of different kinds of volunteering. From Join In, there is some valuable knowledge and learning about how volunteering works and could work.

Challenges for the London 2012 volunteer legacy reflect the absence of planning in advance and of meaningful relationships with the existing volunteer infrastructure.



## CASE STUDY

### 4.2 Manchester volunteer city

Manchester is a city with a strong commitment to volunteering, embedded

Photo: Digital Champion Volunteer at Beswick Library. Credit: Manchester City Council



in local policy. At present, over 6,000 residents are part of the Manchester Volunteer Inspire Programme (MCR VIP), which directs them to volunteering opportunities across the City Council's Neighbourhoods Directorate, covering sports, library services and activities such as neighbourhood litter picks and stewarding events. Volunteers are registered and roles advertised on an online portal that can be accessed as a website or app. Members of staff within the various council departments take responsibility for uploading opportunities to the portal.

MCR VIP also acts as a brokering service for other organisations to reach potential volunteers, including event organisers. The Greater Manchester emergency response volunteers are also registered on this platform. Opportunities are vetted by council staff before they are uploaded to ensure that they meet standards. The website, app and a permanent dedicated Project Manager post are funded by the council. The council also backs volunteering by allowing staff to take three volunteering days per year for local activity in alignment with their 'Our Manchester' strategy.

Alongside this council-led initiative, other volunteering activity flourishes across the city. While MCR VIP finds volunteers to support council services and city events, Manchester Volunteer Centre has a parallel role supporting voluntary sector organisations to recruit and manage volunteers. The university has an active student volunteer programme; many cultural organisations also have volunteer programmes. For example, Manchester International Festival (MIF), a biennial international arts festival run by Factory International, has a cohort of volunteers to support delivery of their

events. Each festival attracts a mix of returning volunteers and new recruits. In between festivals, the MIF volunteers are signposted to MCR VIP, Manchester Volunteer Centre and the city's cultural organisations to find other volunteering opportunities. A separate, more permanent volunteer team supports the day to day running of Factory International's year-round venue, Aviva Studios. Interviewees for this research described Manchester as being particularly efficient and well networked for developing a major event volunteer programme.

The origins of this city-wide approach to volunteering lie in Manchester's hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games. These Games were one of the earliest mass volunteering, large scale events in the UK. Around 10,000 volunteers registered. While there was lots of pre-planning to ensure that the volunteering programme was socially inclusive, little was done in terms of legacy. However, soon after the Games were over, it was recognised that the volunteer cohort wanted to continue and represented a significant asset for the city. A funding bid was submitted to the Single Regeneration Budget resulting in a £100,000 grant for a post-Games volunteer legacy. This was used to create a team of Manchester Event Volunteers managed within the City Council. Research identified significant benefits for volunteers' social inclusion and skills development, and also in the existence of a skilled event volunteering team impacting on the quality of event delivery and Manchester's ability to attract new events to the city (Nichols and Ralston, 2012). Manchester International Festival and its volunteering programme was also a legacy project from the 2002 Commonwealth Games. Over time Manchester's event volunteering team and the sports volunteers merged to form the MCR VIP volunteer team. As volunteers have dropped out, the pool has been refreshed and grown through callouts for new events such as the Women's Euros football tournament, as well as council promotion.

In 2007, Manchester City Council commissioned software from Team Kinetic, a newly formed company, to match people interested in sports with opportunities in local clubs using a database of contacts from the Commonwealth Games volunteer programme – until that point, it had been managed on a spreadsheet. The software was based on a system developed for managing sports coaches' bookings across the city. From the original commission to develop sports volunteering software, Team Kinetic has expanded and gone on to work with other Manchester based institutions, including the universities, Manchester Museum and the Pankhurst Museum. Their client base is now nationwide and has included creation of volunteer management systems to support other major events, including Glasgow's Commonwealth Games in 2014 and Liverpool's hosting of the Eurovision Song Contest in 2023. They are now a well-established company – an unintended and very long-term impact of the original Commonwealth Games volunteering programme.

## Key lessons from Manchester



The Manchester example highlights the benefits of long term, sustained investment in volunteer management. While Manchester City Council did not have a clear plan for volunteering legacy post-Games, they recognised the value and potential of a volunteer cohort for the city. Over time and with flexibility, this has evolved into a wide-ranging offer and inspired other organisations in the city to invest in volunteering infrastructure.

It is interesting to consider what would have happened if Manchester had had a more strategic approach to volunteering legacy immediately after the Commonwealth Games in 2002. While this may have helped to retain more volunteers and to channel efforts and funding more effectively, it may also have reduced some of the innovation which has come from their iterative and flexible approach.



## CASE STUDY

### 4.3 Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games

Photo: Glasgow volunteers at UCI World Cycling Championships 2023. Credit: Glasgow Life/SNS



The Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games established a volunteer programme run by the organising committee, with around 12,300<sup>9</sup> participating as games time volunteers, called the Clyde-siders. Volunteers undertook a range of roles, including a cohort of 160 who supported visitors with access needs. A key driver for participating as a Clyde-sider was the experiential benefits rather than reasons like personal or skills development, or community-focused reasons (Yates and Jones, 2018). Most Clyde-siders were people with previous volunteering experience<sup>10</sup>. Demographically, they were not representative of either Glasgow or Scotland (for example, women and the well-educated were overrepresented amongst the volunteer cohort) (Morrison and Thompson, 2018; Yates and Jones, 2018).

There is evidence of the volunteers having a significant and meaningful experience while participating in the Clyde-sider programme, including: growing social networks; increasing confidence; some evidence of those in unemployment or education developing useful skills and experience; enjoying the 'feel good' factor; feeling they'd contributed to the enhanced reputation of Glasgow; and, in some cases, feeling motivated to volunteer again, with some interested in volunteering at other mega events (Woodall, South et al., 2016; Yates and Jones, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> One source suggests 12,300 (Morrison and Thompson, 2018); another suggests 12,500 (Yates and Jones, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> 26% of applicants had volunteered at the London 2012 Olympics (Yates and Jones, 2018).



Photo: Glasgow 2014 Host City volunteers. Credit: Glasgow Life/Alan Macateer

Alongside the Clyde-siders programme, Glasgow ran a Host City Volunteers programme, which was supported by funding from the Big Lottery Fund. Part of the rationale for the Host City Volunteers, interviewees reported and some evaluation material suggests, was the recognition that the Clyde-siders programme was unlikely to fulfil some of the policy ambitions of local and national government for the social impact of the Games and the role of volunteering within it. The understanding that the recruitment and volunteering opportunities shaped in the Clyde-siders programme would not reach, or be accessible to, particular demographic groups, meant that the parallel Host City Volunteers programme placed significant emphasis on drawing participants from the local population.

The Host City Volunteers programme comprised around 1,100 volunteers. The programme was run by Glasgow Life<sup>11</sup> who brought in additional staff and expertise to run the programme. The recruitment process was targeted, seeking those from deprived wards in the Glasgow area, disabled people, and other specific groups, and used existing networks within local communities such as third sector partners and volunteer infrastructure partners. The evaluation of this programme suggests that this approach was successful in enabling reaching some groups, but not as successful in reaching those who had no volunteer experience as only around 15% of Host City Volunteers had not volunteered previously (Rogerson, Pavoni et al., No date).

As with the Clyde-siders, there is evidence that Host City Volunteers had a very positive experience and that the mechanisms to support different groups were helpful in enabling that by ensuring they felt valued and awareness was raised of their contribution. On the whole, motivations to take part and the impacts of doing so look broadly similar to those of the Clyde-siders: the unique opportunity which the Games presented was a driving force, alongside an interest in socialising and in celebrating Glasgow. There is, however, also evidence that some volunteers wanted to develop their confidence and gain new skills.

Glasgow 2014 is one of the few events reviewed for this study where evaluations included a longer-term element. Clyde-sider applicants were interviewed two years after the Games and there is evidence that those who were selected to volunteer at the Games had become more frequent volunteers than those who were not selected. Most Clyde-sider programme participants had volunteered in some way after the games and 40% had applied for other mega-event volunteering opportunities. There is also evidence of meaningful social and personal outcomes for those who took part (Yates and Jones, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Glasgow Life is an arm's length external body from Glasgow City Council, which runs a range of cultural and sports activities and facilities.

There was, however, no evidence of an increase in volunteering amongst the general population in Glasgow (Morrison and Thompson, 2018). The longitudinal study on the Clyde-siders suggests evidence that there were particular impacts amongst younger volunteers, and that targeting both younger volunteers and those without previous volunteer experience might be a route to greater population-level benefits (Yates and Jones, 2018).

Similarly, with respect to the Host City Volunteers, there is evidence of the longer-term journeys of volunteers. Research conducted three years on from the Games found some small, but measurable impacts on volunteers in terms of their social connectedness. Overall, however, the study found that the programme gave volunteers a successful event experience, but did not achieve a change in their longer-term volunteering behaviour. Whilst the study recognised elements of legacy planning were in place, it also suggested that some volunteers might have benefited from more direct support in order to continue their volunteering journey (Rogerson, Reid et al., 2018).

There is a clear sense that whilst both volunteering programmes sought to achieve changes in volunteering participation in the long-term the evidence indicates that they did not. The official Scottish government evaluation suggests that the potential legacy of the Clyde-siders was lost because those who might have the most to gain from volunteering experiences (those who, perhaps, had not had volunteering experiences previously) were not targeted by the programme. Additionally, there was no change overall in the level of volunteering amongst the local population in Glasgow (Morrison and Thompson, 2018).

Despite this, there is evidence of a significant volunteering legacy from Glasgow 2014. Learning from both programmes informed the development of the Glasgow 2018 European Championships Volunteer Programme<sup>12</sup>; a key element being that specific diversity targets for volunteers were in place, seeking to address the challenges of recruitment identified in the 2014 volunteer cohorts. It also led to the establishment of the Glasgow Sport Volunteer Bureau<sup>13</sup>, a volunteer brokering service to connect volunteering opportunities with sports events and community sports clubs to potential volunteers (Morrison and Thompson, 2018). Glasgow Life continues to hold databases of sports and cultural volunteers that provide a route to communicating a range of volunteering opportunities; these systems, and the permissions around data and contacting personnel, also enable a degree of connectedness and collaboration between organisations like Volunteer Glasgow and Glasgow Life.

The Host City Volunteers, set up to address perceived limitations in the Clyde-siders programme, intended some ongoing legacy from the beginning with activities planned until 2016. As set out above, there is evidence of ongoing event volunteering opportunities and some element of brokering or signposting volunteers to further opportunities in place. Despite this, some argue that Glasgow 2014 suffered from a post-event gap, failing to capitalise on the interest in volunteering or the opportunity to extend the journeys of those newer to volunteering, and that the cessation of the ambassador 'brand' from the Host City Volunteers programme meant that, even where opportunities were signposted, volunteers no longer felt connected and motivated to volunteer in the same way (Rogerson, Reid et al., 2021). The evaluation of the Host City Volunteers legacy also concludes that some volunteers did not have the 'social capital and confidence' required to follow-up with signposted opportunities themselves (Rogerson, Reid et al., 2018: 30).

---

<sup>12</sup> Glasgow 2018 European Championships was the first time in which the existing European Championships of cycling, gymnastics, rowing, swimming, triathlon and athletics were brought together in a single event; Berlin hosted the athletics, and Glasgow and other parts of Scotland hosted all the other sports.

<sup>13</sup> The Bureau is still active and registration sits alongside GlasgowLife Volunteering programme; the system is online, allowing both organisations with opportunities and volunteers to register.

Glasgow 2014's commitment to long-term evaluation has been noted already. It has enabled a useful understanding of what happens to volunteers after the big event is over and the opportunity to re-think what kind of legacy is feasible from event volunteering programmes. One of the long-term studies argues strongly that legacy plans for future event volunteering programmes should perhaps focus on a meaningful event experience, rather than anticipating long-term volunteering behaviour change (Rogerson, Reid et al., 2018).

The continuation of event volunteering in Glasgow, from the European Championships in 2018 and through a series of other events<sup>14</sup> and up to the present, has benefited from a degree of continuity both in terms of how the volunteer programme has been hosted (by either Glasgow City Council or Glasgow Life, who work together extensively on events) and via personnel<sup>15</sup>, with some volunteer management personnel being retained from event to event. This continuity builds both expertise in volunteer management and confidence to set outcomes for volunteering programmes, which can be volunteer-centred rather than event-oriented, and enable volunteer managers to shape programmes and argue for particular approaches.

Some of the relationships with other partners<sup>16</sup> and volunteering infrastructure organisations have also been maintained post-2014. Glasgow has found that some organisations or groups who had previously been contacted, but not convinced about, getting involved with event volunteering opportunities were more confident in exploring engagement for the 2018 European Championships. There is evidence that the city's development of its event hosting capacity has built confidence and credibility within the Glasgow area amongst potential local partners for activities like volunteering.

A key part of this local landscape has been the relationship between volunteer managers within Glasgow City Council/Glasgow Life and organisations like Volunteer Glasgow. These relationships are now quite mature. Volunteer Glasgow were involved in early conversations about the volunteer elements of the bid for Glasgow 2014; a key part of those discussions was a wider vision for volunteering in Glasgow. Following the recognition that the volunteering programme run by the organising committee would not meet the aspirations of that vision, Volunteer Glasgow was one of the key partners working with Glasgow Life to ensure that the Host City Volunteer programme could recruit volunteers in a more meaningful way.

Organisations like Volunteer Glasgow continue to be a part of the way in which Glasgow plans for and manages event volunteering activities and its wider volunteer offer. Glasgow has a formal partnership that works collectively on the Strategic Volunteering Framework through a governance group. Amongst other things, the group has been able to develop and deliver a Volunteering Charter. The recently launched Glasgow Events Strategy, which runs to 2035, has a clear volunteering element which has been supported by this joint thinking and working.

---

<sup>14</sup> Amongst other events, Glasgow has hosted the 2015 World Gymnastics Championships, the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships and the 2024 World Athletics Indoor Championships.

<sup>15</sup> Continuity of personnel has at some points been a series of temporary contracts, which is quite a vulnerable model of continuity.

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Glasgow's Health and Social Care Partnership, Glasgow Disability Alliance and refugee organisations.

Interviewees in the volunteer infrastructure showed confidence that Glasgow is managing to balance the needs of events with those of volunteers. A key part of this is the sense that Glasgow – including senior officials in the council, councillors and other key leadership in the city – understands the purpose and value of volunteering. This has happened because a range of partners in the city have been involved in talking about, planning for and supporting volunteering opportunities together for almost two decades.<sup>17</sup>

Volunteer Scotland's role in supporting Glasgow 2014 was also important as a national intermediary, supporting thinking and resources for volunteer management. Volunteer Scotland also administered the Volunteer Support Pot, funded by the Big Lottery Fund and Spirit of 2012<sup>18</sup>, which provided contributions to costs for those volunteering as Clyde-siders or in the ceremonies. The Volunteer Support Pot was there to enable those who would not be able to volunteer otherwise to do so, supporting costs for those with low income or caring responsibilities and for disabled volunteers.

Similarly, as the city has developed its event management and hosting, with volunteer programmes as a strong element of that, it has also been able to build its relationships with the organisations that own those events. For example, Glasgow has now worked with UK Athletics a number of times. This repeated engagement means that those planning for volunteer programmes can make the case more confidently for what is possible and how it should be delivered.

One further legacy worth noting is the informal infrastructure which volunteers have created for themselves. The VAMOS2014 Facebook group is run by people who like to volunteer. It began in 2014 and now shares a range of volunteering opportunities for the Glasgow area, Scotland and beyond. It is a community: volunteers celebrate, share experiences and keep each other informed of upcoming opportunities.

## Key lessons from Glasgow 2014



The long-term relationship between Glasgow City Council/Glasgow Life and the existing volunteer infrastructure, including Volunteer Glasgow, enabled them to respond quickly to the perceived limitations of the volunteering programme run by the Commonwealth Games organising committee, and provide a complementary programme which involved a wider range of local people.

This ongoing relationship, and the continuity of knowledge and capacity within Glasgow City Council/Glasgow Life, means that when Glasgow hosts events it knows how to run good volunteering programmes alongside them.

Despite this, Glasgow's initial experience with volunteering legacy post-Games reflects a mismatch of policy expectations with actual planning and resources.

<sup>17</sup> Planning for the bid for the Commonwealth Games began in 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Spirit of 2012's funding for the Volunteer Support Pot was given specifically to enable volunteer participation in the opening and closing ceremonies.



## CASE STUDY

### 4.4 Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games



Photo: Birmingham Festival volunteers. Credit: Verity Milligan

Birmingham hosted the Commonwealth Games in 2022, following a shortened process to identify a new host city (after Durban could not proceed due to financial issues).

The city chose to work with the Organising Committee to create a unified volunteer team, rather than one in which the stadium and surrounds were managed by the Organising Committee while host city volunteers were managed elsewhere. The unified team covered the Games themselves, opening and closing ceremonies, visitor welcome and cultural programming. This required a significant element of joint planning and co-operation between the Organising Committee and the local authorities who were hosting elements of the Games across the West Midlands. The volunteering programme aimed to enhance skills and employability, and to increase community engagement and cohesion by bringing people of different backgrounds together. In all, 11,751 volunteers supported the Games. The organisers were successful in meeting their targets in relation to diversity as people from communities all over the city took part as volunteers. A separate programme for young people, Gen22, aimed to offer support into volunteering for young people with additional barriers to engagement.

The programme evaluation indicates that the goals for the volunteer team were broadly achieved (KPMG, 4Global et al., 2024). The post-Games volunteers' survey showed that around 82% of volunteers felt that they had more confidence in their ability to seek new employment, training or education opportunities, and more relevant experience. 19% of volunteers stated that their volunteer experience had led them to apply for opportunities they might not otherwise have applied for, indicating that the experience helped to build confidence. The report concluded that:

there is evidence of some positive impact of the Games on opportunities for and levels of engagement in skills, employment or volunteering. However, in spite of this, perceptions of the opportunities for such engagement remain low among young Birmingham residents suggesting more may need to be done in this space for the full potential impact of the Games to be realised. (KPMG, 4Global et al., 2024: 57)

A Legacy Plan for the Commonwealth Games was published in March 2021 and updated in July 2022. This stated that the organisers wanted to leave a long-lasting legacy by encouraging Games volunteers into community sports, arts or social action activity, attracting new people to volunteering and diversifying the volunteer workforce (Birmingham 2022, 2022). The expectation was that some volunteers would move into training and employment opportunities, with volunteers post-Games being connected to advice on how to maximise their Games experience and skills and linked to vacancies for jobs and volunteering opportunities. The named lead legacy partner for the volunteering programme was the Organising Committee, while the named contributing partner was the West Midlands Combined Authority. However, during volunteer onboarding, volunteers were asked for permission to transfer their data to Birmingham City Council at the end of the Games.

At the time the Games ended, both the West Midlands Combined Authority and Birmingham City Council had an interest in further development of volunteering beyond the Games. For West Midlands Combined Authority, there was an opportunity to enhance their work on the jobs and skills agenda across the region. For Birmingham City Council, there was also an aspiration set out in the original plan for the Games to encourage more physical activity, build the city's grassroots sports offer and continue engagement with the event volunteer cohort in some form to support future events attracted to the city.

In 2023, the year during which post-Games legacy plans were rolled out, Birmingham City Council was in severe financial difficulties culminating in the issue of a Section 114 notice in September – effectively the council was in bankruptcy. In this context, underspent funds of £70 million were placed with the West Midlands Combined Authority, with £5 million granted to a new legacy body, United By 2022, to carry on successful community engagement programmes. United By 2022 took responsibility for volunteer legacy and in the first half of 2023 they carried out consultation with the volunteers and other stakeholders. This resulted in the launch of Volunteers Collective in June 2023. The volunteer database had been transferred to Birmingham City Council at the end of the Games, and they were now contacted with an invitation to sign up to the new United By 2022 portal.

Volunteers Collective has a specific remit to provide volunteers for events across the West Midlands. The programme is centred around an online portal but a volunteer management team ensures that volunteers are in contact with staff members. Around 2,500 volunteers have signed up to the portal of whom around 700 have taken part in a volunteering opportunity provided through the programme (FRY Creative, 2024). The post-Games evaluation highlighted the challenge of capitalising on the momentum of the volunteering programme:

...a number of community stakeholders reported that there was a missed opportunity of taking advantage of the enthusiasm and number of Games volunteers to engage them in other non-Games-related activities immediately post-Games. Stakeholders reported that organisations wanted to support volunteers and get them involved in other activities, but delays to the set-up of the volunteering platform meant “*lost momentum and lost opportunity*”. (KPMG, 4Global et al., 2024)

United by 2022 offers a three-tier support package to event organisers, with the most basic being advertising the opportunity via the portal and the most extensive being a full volunteer recruitment, training and management service to support larger events. The intention is to develop a business model in which United By 2022’s costs are covered by fees from event organisers. Until now, the cost of the programme has been covered by legacy funding, but this came to an end in March 2025.

Evaluation of United By 2022’s first full year of activity from June 2023 to May 2024, highlighted a range of successes in continuing to engage Games volunteers. Between June 2023 and May 2024 volunteers had supported 33 events across the West Midlands. The majority of these were sports tournaments such as the World Trampoline Championships, but the cohort had also supported arts events including Birmingham Festival 2023, another Games legacy project. Additionally, 61% of volunteering applications were converted into a successful volunteering position. The one-year post-Games evaluation included a survey of the volunteer cohort that indicated 83% of volunteers had continued to volunteer after the Games and 63% felt that the Games had a positive impact on the frequency with which they volunteer. For those who had signed up to the portal, it was helping them to see opportunities they otherwise wouldn’t (FRY Creative, 2024).

Three years on from the Commonwealth Games, the impact on the volunteering infrastructure of the West Midlands appears mixed. There is now a new organisation managing a team of experienced events volunteers, with plans to grow the team and establish a business model to enable them to continue. United By 2022 will face challenges in attracting enough funds to cover their costs and in integrating new volunteers with the existing cohort; however, this is a substantial new body meeting an unmet need as Birmingham grows its events programme.

Other aspirations for volunteering legacy have not been realised. These included opportunities to promote training and employment opportunities, encourage some of the volunteers to move into supporting community sport and to promote the local physical activity offer to volunteers. The post-Games evaluation reviewed data from the Active Live Adult Survey and suggested that Commonwealth Games had helped to mitigate against a drop in sports related volunteering seen in other local authorities during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (KPMG, 4Global et al., 2024). However, on the whole, lack of capacity and funding within the local authority has been a barrier to pursuing further legacy outcomes.

## Key lessons from Birmingham 2022



Birmingham's experience highlights the value of a good volunteer experience during the Games and through engagement over the longer term with many volunteers continuing to volunteer either through United By 2022 or elsewhere. The Organising Committee did an excellent job of delivering volunteering during the Games.

The lead organisation with designated responsibility for volunteer legacy was the Organising Committee – with hindsight, it may have been beneficial to place this responsibility with a more established organisation.

United By 2022 have been given a very short period in which to establish a sustainable business model for the volunteer cohort due to time restrictions on legacy spending. It would have been beneficial to spread this funding out over an extended period, allowing this new organisation more time to build their client base and commercial offer.

Photo: Birmingham Festival volunteers. Credit: Verity Milligan





## CASE STUDY

### 4.5 Rugby League World Cup 2021



Photo: Rugby League World Cup 2021 volunteers. Credit: Rugby Football League

The Rugby League World Cup 2021 (RLWC2021) was hosted across England, mostly in venues across the north of the country. Delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tournament took place in the summer of 2022, allowing an extended lead-in time for planning and community engagement work ahead of the event. From the start, there was a commitment to RLWC2021 being a tournament with a strong social purpose based on community engagement activity in areas of deprivation. In comparison to other such events, RLWC2021 stated that they were not planning for legacy. Instead, the focus was on building and embedding social impact before the tournament, so that the event became an amplifier and celebration of this activity.

Three distinct volunteering programmes were developed leading up to and during RLWC2021, which were all run by the Rugby League World Cup. The Power Squad volunteers supported the delivery of the tournament itself. The Community Volunteering Programme recruited people to work in community rugby league, with many embarking on roles in rugby league before the event. The award-winning Inclusive Volunteering Programme was a partnership with Community Integrated Care to create volunteering roles for people with care and support needs due to physical, mental and learning disabilities. In total, 1,380 volunteers took part across the three programmes.

After the tournament, the Rugby Football League found that there was a need for additional intervention to sustain the benefits of the volunteering programme, to meet the demand for further volunteering opportunities from enthused participants and to create capacity to support an upswell in interest in grassroots rugby. The League developed two approaches to this. Firstly, in recognition that the Power Squad volunteers were most likely to want to take part in further events volunteering, and had developed the skillset to do so, the volunteering portal was used to establish an event volunteering team. Around 300 RLWC2021 volunteers signed up to receive information about opportunities to support at match days, local finals and school competitions, and further recruitment has grown this pool to around 500 people. The next priority is to find meaningful engagement for this growing group of volunteers by exploring how more tasks and responsibilities can be handed over to these volunteers, now rebranded as Try Force.

Secondly, one of the key positive impacts of the tournament was an increase in interest in rugby, particularly amongst younger girls and disabled people. As a result, local clubs and foundations needed to build capacity by recruiting additional volunteers. Underspend from the tournament's volunteering budget via Sport England was allocated to this purpose. The initial plan was to recruit centrally via a series of in-person roadshow events but, when take up was low, they set up a community volunteering fund that provided grants for 16 individual rugby league foundations to support volunteer development for two priority programmes: RugBees for 7-11 year old girls, and disability rugby league. To date this scheme has recruited 90 new volunteers, with funds provided for training, coaching qualifications, kit and rewards such as game tickets.

The partnership between Community Integrated Care and Rugby League Football, which pre-dated the tournament, continues. A number of Inclusive Volunteering participants have gone on to further opportunities including photography at events and paid employment. The charity is leading a range of programmes to address health, social and economic inequalities in rugby league communities.

Rugby League Football published a volunteering strategy in 2023 which runs to 2030. This builds on the foundations of the tournament's volunteering programme, starting from the position that development of volunteering is essential if the sport is to grow. The strategy is structured around four key goals: to grow, support, value and diversify the volunteer network.

## Key lessons from Rugby League World Cup 2021



Rugby League World Cup is an example of an event organising team that thought in advance about the kind of volunteering legacy it wanted to see and structured its programmes accordingly. As a result, many new volunteers were embedded in local clubs before the tournament began.

Despite this, the Rugby Football League still had to adapt quickly to respond to a demand post-event from volunteers who wanted to work on future events.



## CASE STUDY

### 4.6 Derry City of Culture 2013



Photo: Derry 2013 volunteers. Credit: Belfast Telegraph

Derry was the UK's first City of Culture in 2013, having been awarded the title in 2010. The city ran a volunteer programme with the aim of supporting large scale events and festivals across the year and providing a high quality visitor welcome to Derry. 115 City of Culture events were supported by volunteers, working almost 12,000 volunteer hours with 12.5% volunteers living in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. Whilst the programme sought to recruit new volunteers, all the arts and cultural organisations already had a strong foundation of support from local people.

The programme was established by North West Volunteer Centre, the local volunteering support organisation for Derry-Londonderry and Strabane, and overseen by a steering group of local stakeholders. Two additional posts were created to manage volunteering for City of Culture events and city welcome. Strategic support was provided by Volunteer Now, which has a remit to support volunteering across Northern Ireland. Volunteer Now had previous experience of delivering volunteering support programmes for major events having worked on the Olympic Torch Relay and being in the process of developing the volunteer programme for the World Police and Fire Games, held in Belfast in 2013. Volunteer Now provided advice and guidance and employed staff seconded to North West Volunteer Centre to provide additional capacity during the year.

Unlike many other major events programmes the volunteer team was not set up and managed within the event delivery team, but within the city's existing volunteering infrastructure that was expanded for the purpose. The City of Culture team made requests to North West Volunteer Centre to supply volunteers across the year and the Centre provided them – a system which worked very well. Some additional volunteering was organised through local community groups to facilitate their involvement with the programme.

Planning for volunteering, and for legacy beyond the year, was set out in the 10 year strategy funded by the Department for Communities and Ilex. Volunteering impacts were not included in the ten key objectives set out in the July 2013 business case, or the final evaluation report. The evaluation of Derry's City of Culture year did not include any indicators relating to the impact of the volunteering programme specifically, with the focus being on the wider impact on the community in relation to arts attendance and participation, and improvement in community relations. The business case identified that some of these impacts could be achieved through volunteering.

With regard to legacy there was an expectation that North West Volunteer Centre would absorb the volunteers they were managing at the end of the year and offer them further opportunities, while some volunteers became embedded in the cultural organisations they had worked with over the year. There was also a hope and expectation that a proportion of the volunteers would use their new skills to move into employment. The North West Volunteer Centre put forward a plan demonstrating the need for continued volunteering (and funding to sustain it) beyond the year to support Derry's legacy aspirations and deliver planned events in the city.

Derry emerged into a very difficult economic situation at the end of its year as UK City of Culture. At the end of the year, North West Volunteer Centre faced both a withdrawal of the additional funding provided through City of Culture budget and a reduction in their regular funding. In the subsequent 12 years, suspensions of the Northern Ireland Assembly also negatively impacted the sector, making the negotiation of longer-term funding packages more difficult. As a result, events volunteering cannot be resourced to the same level and there is less funding available for staffing, training and volunteer expenses such as travel, lunches and uniforms. The local council's community grants programme does, however, fund volunteering as an eligible cost within project budgets.

Despite this, Derry has continued to grow its festivals and events programme since 2013 with the availability of an experienced pool of volunteers considered to be a key factor in enabling this and volunteering viewed as integral to the delivery of events in the city. North West Volunteer Centre continues to provide volunteer recruitment and management services to events in the city with some of the original 2013 volunteers still actively involved. Major events such as Culture Night and Derry's annual and internationally renowned Hallowe'en Festival are run with volunteer support. In 2025, Derry City and Strabane District released an update to their Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan (2017-2032) that includes an action to 'increase and sustain the current levels of volunteering within the community and expand on opportunities to recognise volunteers' contribution to society', indicating that volunteering is now well embedded in strategic thinking about the future of Derry (Derry City and Strabane District Council, 2025).

Volunteer Now has continued to run an event volunteering team alongside its other services, providing training and managing volunteers for a wide range of sporting and cultural events across Northern Ireland, supported initially by five years of core costs from Tourism NI. More recently they have been able to widen the scope of this team to respond to urgent need during the COVID-19 pandemic and to welcome Ukrainian refugees. While the resourcing of this team remains challenging, a flow of new events is enabling its continuation.

## Key lessons from Derry City of Culture 2013



Derry was able to run its programme from within the city's existing volunteering infrastructure – this helped significantly with retention of volunteers at the end of the year and significantly built the skills and capacity of the city's volunteering and cultural sectors.

Inclusion of the volunteering programme as a priority within the evaluation of the UK City of Culture would have enabled organisations across the city to advocate more effectively for further support and resources for volunteering legacy.

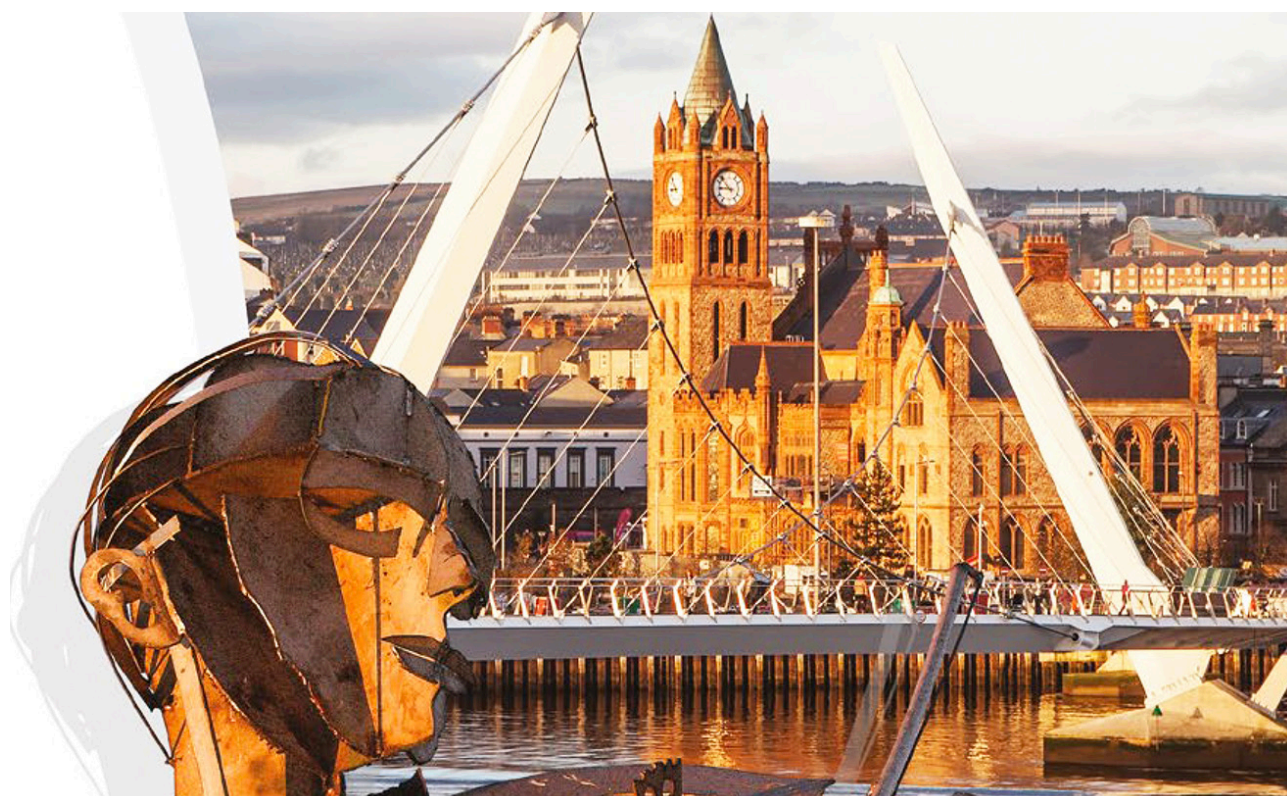


Photo: Image from Derry City & Strabane District's Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan, 2017-2032



## CASE STUDY

### 4.7 Hull UK City of Culture 2017

Photo: Hull 2017 volunteers. Credit: Leo Francis



Hull UK City of Culture 2017 set up a significant pilot phase volunteer programme in 2016 and just under 2,500 volunteers completed training to join the programme. One of the things the programme directly sought to do was place the volunteer experience at the heart of its planning and delivery. Whilst some of our understanding of this reflects better access to material on the planning of the programme<sup>19</sup>, it is also clear from interviews that Hull began its thinking about volunteers with a recognition that event volunteering programmes are often centred around the event and what is required to deliver it, rather than the volunteer experience.

The Hull 2017 volunteer programme is notable for this emphasis on learning from previous event volunteering programmes – sometimes in terms of what had not worked well – and also for its high quality volunteer management (e.g. having a volunteer charter, and aiming for and receiving the ‘Investors in Volunteering’ kitemark) and the explicit way in which planning set out the benefits for participants. Like Glasgow 2014, understanding of the programme is supported by access to substantive evaluation and this benefited from both good quality management data (from the Volunteer Management System) and from good access to volunteers being built in.

<sup>19</sup> The programme was subject to an evaluation which describes both the ethos and process in some detail and this study was able to access interviews with individuals who were involved in delivering the programme. This provides greater insight into the planning for volunteers than has been available for several of the other events in this study.

The volunteer programme sought to reach a wide range of people from the local population. Whilst it succeeded in reaching some people from groups who might not typically be represented in event volunteering programmes, its recruitment also reflected some of the patterns seen in other event volunteering programmes with more women, retired people and students and fewer disabled people than is representative of the local population. First time volunteers accounted for 20% of participants (Absolutely Cultured, 2018).

The evaluation gathered data on motivations for volunteering, which included: pride and passion for Hull; a sense of the unique opportunities; a chance to get to know the city better; and social opportunities (Absolutely Cultured, 2018). Volunteers were supported by training, including training for Leader Volunteers, Masterclasses and other activities. A significant element of the programme was training volunteer managers and event leads in partner organisations to ensure that volunteer management would be of a good standard throughout the programme, whoever was hosting or putting on an event. There was a significant emphasis on valuing and celebrating the volunteers. The Volunteer Management System provided a digital interface which enabled volunteers to have a record of their own activity as well as providing data for reporting and planning purposes (Absolutely Cultured, 2021).

There is evidence of volunteers having a meaningful experience with personal wellbeing and social benefits, increased confidence (including confidence in taking part in volunteering in the future) and civic pride. There is also evidence of the value of volunteers to the experiences of staff, local residents, audiences and tourists with volunteers being seen as enhancing the Hull 2017 experience. Volunteers felt committed to the legacy of Hull 2017, and typically planned to continue volunteering (Absolutely Cultured, 2018).

The main evaluation of the Hull 2017 volunteer programme notes that work was done to build partnerships with the voluntary community sector. An evaluation of the initial legacy stage of the programme notes, however, that there was some apprehension in the sector in 2017, and a sense that the programme might supplant other volunteering opportunities. Interviews indicate there was dialogue and engagement with the local volunteer infrastructure, but also a sense that the aspirations of the new volunteer programme would require some different approaches and support to any existing in the city.

The 2017 programme did, however, build relationships with some parts of the cultural sector; volunteers were used to support activities run directly by the Hull 2017 vehicle and by other cultural partners in the city. The structures and approaches created for the volunteer programme meant that the volunteer management team could set clear expectations for any partners using the Hull 2017 volunteers.

Following the Hull 2017 year, the volunteer programme was moved into Absolutely Cultured, which was launched as a legacy vehicle in 2018. In that period, the programme gained funding from Spirit of 2012 to undertake work exploring what a 'sustained, city-wide (and potentially regional) volunteering programme' might look like (Absolutely Cultured, 2021). Interviewees felt that having Spirit as a potential funder, and being able to have frank and exploratory conversations with Spirit prior to a funding bid, had been particularly valuable in planning for and securing a meaningful legacy. Ultimately, Spirit of 2012 funded three phases of the volunteer programme: during 2017, in the transition period post 2017 and again from 2021-2024. Having a consistent funder – and building a relationship with that funder, sharing the learning as the programme has evolved – has been key to the programmes' survival and development.

The other key in enabling this first stage of legacy was the confidence in, and understanding of, the volunteering programme amongst councillors and senior officers at Hull City Council. The programme was able to take all the assets from the volunteer management systems into Absolutely Cultured, as well as key parts of the programme like the training and masterclasses and support the 2017 volunteer cohorts to continue to volunteer in similar opportunities, if they wanted to do so.

The programme was able to experiment with its activities, including exploring volunteering opportunities beyond the cultural sector and social action opportunities based within communities at a local level. In the COVID-19 period, the programme pivoted to work with Hull City Council and alongside other organisations in the voluntary and community sector to connect volunteers with opportunities to support the pandemic response. This included staffing a telephone befriending service, collecting and delivering shopping, supplies and prescriptions for those shielding and walking people's dogs. Volunteers were also signposted to other COVID-19 response volunteering activities, such as vaccination volunteering (Absolutely Cultured, 2021).

Despite these wider connections, the evaluation for this phase reports that the potential to be a city-wide, cross-sector volunteering programme was considered, but would have required significant additional resource which looked unrealistic. Additionally, the view of volunteers appeared to be that the programme should retain an identity which linked it to supporting the cultural sector. The programme also sought to recruit and support volunteers from some demographics underrepresented in the Hull 2017 cohorts and (whilst this was interrupted to some extent by COVID-19) gained some valuable learning about the kinds of opportunities and support which different groups require (Absolutely Cultured, 2021).



Photo: Hull 2017 volunteers. Credit: Leo Francis

Whilst in this phase, the programme developed a volunteer consultation panel to enable volunteers to contribute to the planning and shaping of the programme. At the end of this phase, it argued that there was the potential to shift from a transactional model of volunteering towards something which was 'a movement of active citizens.' Part of this reflects the emphasis on social action and on approaches like co-creation, as well as the formal establishment of a 'volunteer voice' in the programme's thinking. There is some evidence in this phase that the transition from 2017 to post-2017 was not necessarily straightforward for volunteers in terms of the purpose and meaning of the programme (Absolutely Cultured, 2021).

In 2021, the volunteer programme was moved out of Absolutely Cultured and into Visit Hull and East Yorkshire, the tourism partnership between Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council. For the volunteer programme, Hull City Council is the lead partner. Spirit of 2012 agreed a further three years of funding while Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council also fund the programme. The programme was renamed and branded for the first time since the UK City of Culture year as HEY! Volunteering. It now focuses predominantly on volunteering in arts, culture and heritage in Hull and East Yorkshire. There is also a pilot element of the programme which is building volunteer cohorts in Bridlington and Goole, both in the East Riding, and which has secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Innovation Fund. These pilots are using the structure of the existing volunteer programme but applying it in a place-based way in those two areas.

The programme includes a mixture of opportunities that run throughout the year with volunteers supporting visitor information points and placed at key locations in the city, and volunteers supporting ongoing activities, like galleries. The volunteers also support a range of events, both annual or regular events and special events. There are some aspirations amongst those running the programme and close stakeholders for ways in which the programme could develop in the future, including how it engages with, and supports, volunteering opportunities for different groups of people in the area, and whether there are other elements of the current arts, culture and heritage offer that the volunteers could support.

Volunteer development is still a strong part of the programme. Volunteers have a core training and induction process, agree to a volunteer charter and understand the processes which the programme uses. They get a uniform and are able to access possible volunteer opportunities via an online system. Other development opportunities, such as the masterclass sessions covering a range of topics – from social activities to personal development to creative activities – are still part of the programme. When volunteers are involved in activities like staffing the tourist information points, they get a briefing with up-to-date information on what is happening in Hull.

About 80 organisations and activities partner with the programme to host volunteers throughout the year. They can put a request to the volunteer programme to host volunteers and these requests are still coming in as the awareness of the programme spreads. As with the Hull 2017 programme, HEY! Volunteering still places significant emphasis on the quality of the volunteer experience and requires potential hosts to engage with these expectations and any necessary training and processes. Some volunteers have worked with the programme for a long time, but there are also examples of volunteers who have moved on to other opportunities outside the programme, and the programme seeks to support and celebrate that. The programme has a relationship with the wider volunteering infrastructure, which is now mutually beneficial, sharing plans and training programmes as well as signposting volunteers to different development and volunteering opportunities.

There are also new partnerships: the Freedom Festival previously run its own volunteer programme<sup>20</sup>, for example, but now works with the HEY! Volunteering doing considerable work to think about what volunteer experiences it offers and how it engages volunteers across its activities. Partnerships like this also enable both parties to have conversations about their ambitions for the volunteers and what they might be able to achieve collectively that they can't do alone. For the Freedom Festival, the HEY! Volunteering infrastructure with its online platform, registration and management, is particularly valuable as it means they don't need to replicate this.

For stakeholders in the city, the volunteer programme remains perhaps the most visible and tangible part of the legacy from Hull 2017. The volunteers are seen as the friendly, welcoming face of Hull, enhancing the visitor experience with their passion and knowledge. At this stage – with the programme having transitioned into a legacy vehicle, then out and into Hull City Council as part of Visit Hull and East Yorkshire – there is evidence of a transition in perceptions too: the volunteer programme isn't seen as a legacy from Hull 2017 anymore, but just as part of how Hull does things. The role for the volunteer programme, as a key part of Hull's identity, is recognised and supported by council officials and elected representatives and by stakeholders in the cultural sector and the wider voluntary and community sector. It has raised the profile of volunteering in the whole city.

## Key lessons from Hull 2017



The emphasis on the volunteer journey, offering a high-quality volunteer experience and volunteer management in the Hull 2017 volunteer programme means that the legacy infrastructure for volunteering has retained that structure and volunteer focus.

The role of the local authorities, including the political commitment to a long-term volunteer programme, and the ongoing relationship with Spirit of 2012 which funded the programme twice in its legacy phase, has been key to the continuation of the programme.

The programme explored a wider volunteering remit – beyond culture and heritage – for a period but has returned to its original focus. This reflects both the increased resources required for a wider programme and the way in which volunteers feel affiliated with a particular volunteer identity.



**The next chapter of this report sets out some of the key factors that can be observed across different events, which help or hinder infrastructural legacy.**

<sup>20</sup> The transition between volunteer programmes has been met with predominantly positive feedback from volunteers around volunteer identity and the way the programmes and opportunities were structured and managed.

# 5. What helps or hinders infrastructural legacy?



# 5. What helps or hinders infrastructural legacy?

Chapter 3 set out some of the ways in which infrastructure is created in order to run event volunteer programmes and how those infrastructures are managed after the event is over. It gives a sense of where there is a legacy of new infrastructure, or partial infrastructure, and a sense of what is known about the way in which that interacts with existing volunteer infrastructure. Chapter 4 gave an in-depth look at these different approaches across seven case studies.

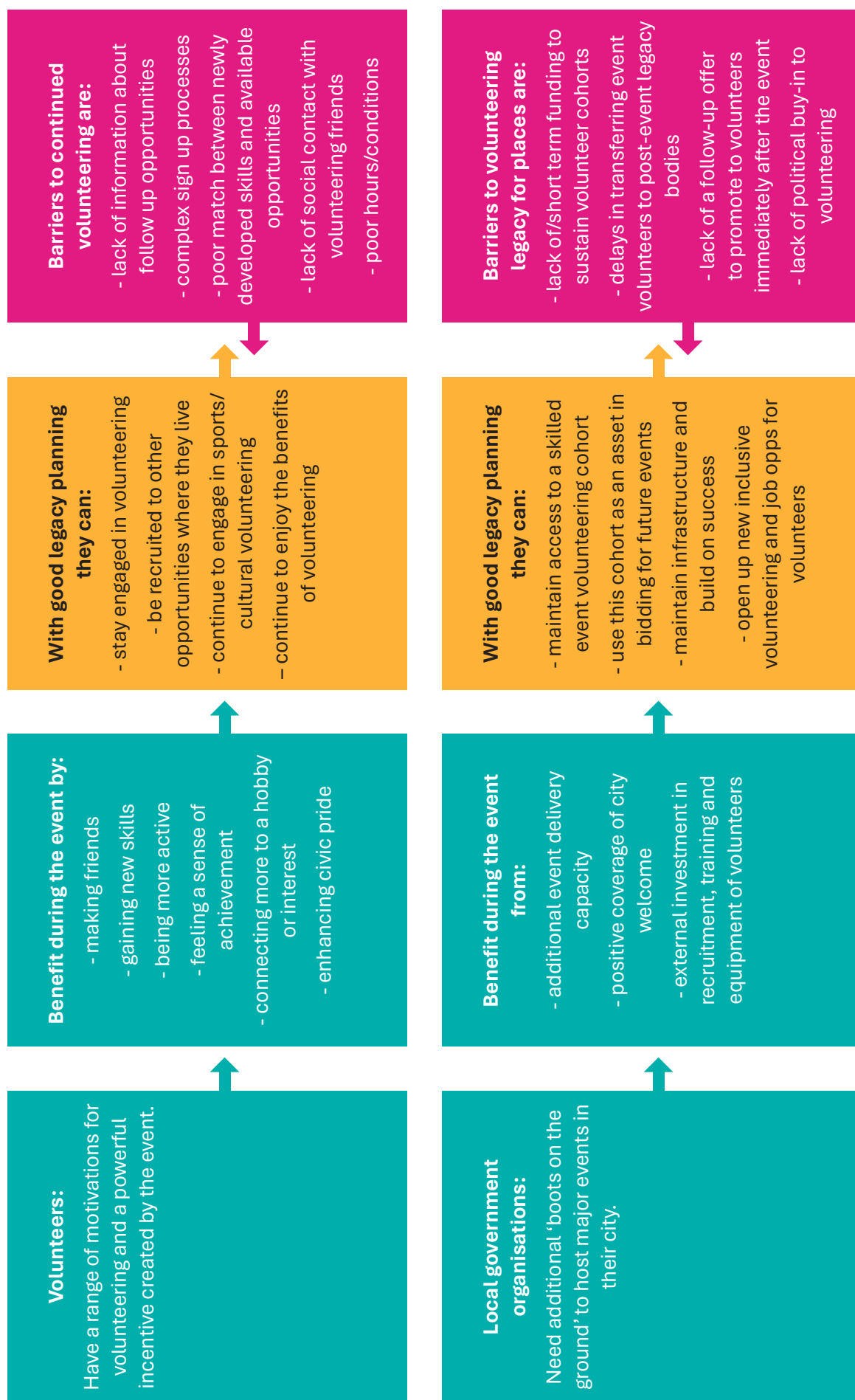
Through the interviews and literature review, a number of factors were identified as influencing the way in which infrastructure is created and what kinds of infrastructural legacy (and volunteering legacy) are possible. This chapter explores those factors, looking six key themes:

1	The <b>purpose and planning</b> for event volunteer programmes and their legacies.
2	The <b>structures and decision-making</b> responsibilities that govern how programmes are run and how legacy is decided.
3	How the job of <b>volunteer management</b> is accomplished.
4	How knowledge and learning are produced, shared and reflected upon.
5	What role <b>policy and funding</b> play in the design of volunteer event programmes and their legacies.
6	The <b>impact of COVID-19</b> disruptions on programmes and their legacies.

Before this analysis, Figure 3 sets out an overview of the kinds of benefits different stakeholders can see from event volunteer programmes and an overview of what makes good legacy and the barriers to this.



Figure 3: Benefits, legacies and barriers by stakeholder type





## 5.1 Purpose and planning

It is worth noting that typically **events do not set out explicitly to create volunteer infrastructure legacy**. The main purpose of event volunteer programmes is to enable the event to function successfully; we know that this overall emphasis is often balanced with the desire to ensure that volunteers have a meaningful experience (though the relationship between these two drivers varies across different volunteer programmes). Most commonly when thinking about legacy, this is understood as creating a legacy of ongoing volunteering (chapter 3, section 3.2.1, outlines the legacies that event volunteer programmes typically seek). Many of the examples reviewed for this study could be summarised as having the following proposition:

1	To involve a wide range of people (ideally including groups who are not normally involved) in a meaningful volunteering experience in which they are celebrated for their contribution.
2	To create immediate first level outcomes in those groups: give enjoyment, build confidence, develop skills, support social connections, contribute to wellbeing.
3	To convert that volunteering experience into a motivation to volunteer again in the future.
4	To inspire other people who haven't taken up that opportunity to also volunteer in the future.

Different events express the value of volunteering in different ways, but the emphasis from those designing and managing volunteer programmes is often first on the individual – the value of the experience of volunteering – and secondarily on the value of volunteering to organisations, groups and, more generally, society. Within this aspiration that volunteers will want to continue to volunteer, and that others might be inspired to do so, is the implicit assumption that the volunteering infrastructure – other organisations who support and need volunteers – will benefit from this.

Looking at what drives the planning for volunteer programmes, there are two key challenges seen in a number of examples. The first is **the gap between wanting to engage particular groups in the population and being able to plan to do so with the right knowledge and appropriate partners**. In most of the events considered, there has been an aspiration to create a volunteer team which is broadly representative of the local population where the event is being held, with some events stating clear aspirations to recruit from target groups based on protected characteristics. For example, we have seen event organisers and local authorities in partnership choose to focus on young people not in education, employment or training, or on disabled people. Even where volunteer managers have worked hard with local partners on this, it has been very difficult and tends to be delivered through a parallel volunteering programme running alongside the main programme.

There is, generally, an absence of learning about how this works, recognition from event planners and stakeholders about what is feasible and understanding of the kinds of resources and work required if an event has real aspirations in this area. This requires partnership – local, expert and specific – and time to collaborate and design either one inclusive volunteering programme or a series of programmes under the event umbrella. It also requires the existing infrastructure of local volunteering organisations and community groups (for example disability groups or the youth sector) to have the capacity to engage in that partnership.

The second key challenge is the **tension between what makes a meaningful volunteering experience and the requirements of the event**, particularly if it is ultimately owned by an external body and franchised to an organising committee or national governing body. This tension is exacerbated if the aim is to use the volunteering programme not only to deliver a fantastic event for artists or sports people and audiences, but also to create outcomes for volunteers, and particularly for groups which may not normally be involved in these kinds of volunteering opportunities. The study heard from several interviewees that event volunteering opportunities are often structured for the benefit of the event and not the volunteer, that hours can be long, and the assumption is that the volunteer will be physically fit and won't need any reasonable adjustments or additional support. There are some volunteers for whom these conditions are reasonable and a meaningful volunteering experience is possible. These structural issues, however, make it more challenging to include under-represented groups or people with additional needs.

When thinking about aspirations for volunteer legacy, **relatively few events plan for legacy from the beginning**. Those bidding to host events are aware of the need for legacy, but aspirations lack clarity and detail and they easily become lost as event delivery takes over. At present, events could be characterised as often hoping for, rather than planning for, legacy. This matters, because those responsible for delivering post-event legacy often find that the way in which the event volunteering programme has been structured and delivered was not designed to maximise legacy. If there was a clear understanding from the start that there is an aspiration for legacy, and specifically what that looks like, event volunteering programmes could be set up in a way which facilitates those outcomes.

Finally, there is also evidence of some **differences across events in the range of stakeholders who can influence questions of planning and purpose**. These differences include:

- Whether events are multi-sport, and/or expected to reach beyond dedicated fans of that sport(s).
- Whether events are framed as an important moment, not just in the location where they are taking place, but nationally.
- Who owns the event format and the degree to which that offers flexibility to hosting locations and organisations.

Crucially, the study found some concern in relation to several events about whether stakeholders were able to be involved in the right conversations at the right time in order to influence discussions about the purpose and planning of volunteer programmes. This includes both local and national stakeholders from the existing volunteer infrastructure. Cities which had hosted a number of large-scale events said that their infrastructure was well developed, but there was sometimes a challenge in encouraging event organisers to make use of it as they wanted to control the volunteering programme from start to finish.



## 5.2 Structures and decision-making

As described in chapters 3 and 4, a number of different approaches can be seen in setting up delivery vehicles for event volunteering. These differences are often dictated by the nature of the event itself. City of Culture programmes that run over the course of a calendar year will inevitably be set up differently from sports tournaments delivered in a short window of less than a month. This study has looked at sports tournaments hosted in one place (such as the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and Birmingham) and in many cities at once (such as the Rugby League World Cup and the UEFA Women's Euros). **The nature of the event dictates the delivery structure and the extent to which the event delivery is embedded in the place where it is held.** This has an impact on volunteering infrastructure legacy, although it was not found that some types of event or delivery structure lend themselves better to post-event volunteering.

Most commonly, where major sports events are restricted to a governing body's tried and tested event delivery format or an organising committee's operations, there is a tendency to be less responsive to local need than other major events (perhaps inevitably, it is found that this is the case where they are setting up volunteering in a number of different locations at once). In response to this, local authorities have been seen to set up their own parallel volunteering programmes with the event-focused volunteers running separately from those doing city hosting activities (e.g. Glasgow 2014). City of Culture programmes, on the other hand, have a full year in which to embed volunteering activity and to introduce volunteers to local organisations. While it would have expected to see that this made it easier to plan and deliver volunteering legacy, in fact, challenges remained. Volunteer programmes within City of Culture are still vulnerable at the end of the year and require a legacy plan and funding to be sustained.

This report has identified several ways in which delivery structures effect volunteering legacy and impact on volunteering infrastructure.

Timescales for major events are a significant factor. The **gap between cities bidding to host an event and the establishment of delivery vehicles to run the event** can impact on the ability to maintain partnerships with local organisations who were consulted and engaged during the bidding process. By the time the event team has been put in place, the pressure is on to deliver the event to a fixed deadline and legacy planning comes second to that. There are also **gaps after the event when delivery vehicles are winding down and legacy arrangements are being made.** This is a time of significant churn with staff moving on and handing over information and decisions being made about legacy often reliant on the availability of underspend from event budgets or from the submission of further funding applications. In this context delays are common.

The research has identified a variety of types of organisation that take responsibility for volunteer legacy post-event. This can be the local authority (for example Manchester 2002), a newly established legacy organisation (Birmingham 2022, Hull 2017, London 2012), or a local voluntary sector support organisation (Derry 2013). In other cases, responsibility remains with the organising body that ran the event (Rugby League World Cup) or shared between organisations who both have access to the volunteer database after the event (after the UEFA Women's Euros tournament volunteer databases were accessible by local authorities in host cities and the Football Association). After Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008, responsibility for volunteer management was passed on to Liverpool ONE, a private sector company, who maintained the volunteer team for a number of years as part of their commitment to corporate social responsibility. Despite successful examples of volunteering legacy in a range of structures, it is clear that the **time-lag between the end of the event and the establishment of new arrangements can lead to missed opportunities** and lost momentum to direct volunteers into new volunteering experiences while they are enthusiastic.

The impacts of this time-lag are seen most frequently in the process of transferring volunteer contact details from one organisation to another. If volunteer data is held by the event delivery vehicle, then there needs to be agreement at the volunteer recruitment stage about who will inherit the data at the end of the event. In some cases, the organisation that will inherit the data does not yet exist. **Making early agreements about where the data will go at the end of the event requires a nuanced and specific understanding of what type of legacy you want to see** and who is best placed to deliver it.

There have been examples of successful event volunteering legacy through slow evolution rather than the implementation of an immediate plan – Manchester after the 2002 Commonwealth Games is a good example. In general, however, conversations with people working in event volunteering indicate that a smooth transition and transfer of data, planned in advance so that it can be executed as soon as possible after the event, is the best-case scenario. It has also been found that there is often a requirement for additional work on development of online platforms for legacy volunteering. Where mobile apps and online portals have been created for one specific organiser and location, they often need substantial remodelling after the event, for example to meet the needs of multiple event organisers, rather than one.

There are specific challenges for temporary delivery vehicles set up to run an event. They may be within the designated organisation that has the remit for volunteering legacy with a **very limited window in which to make appropriate arrangements before they are wound up and staff move on**. Short-term thinking is baked into the way these delivery vehicles work and in this case volunteering infrastructure legacy may take the form of staff members who can take their knowledge of how to run good event volunteering to their next role. It has been found that staff churn can limit continuity and that, where members of staff transfer from the delivery vehicle organisation to new roles in the legacy organisation, there are significant benefits as they have established positive relationships with the volunteer cohort.

The prevalence of new organisations that are set up to deliver legacy with a wider programme of post-event engagement (e.g. Hull 2017 and Birmingham 2022) indicates that in many cases the existing infrastructure is not suitable, either because there is a lack of capacity or know-how. However, this leads to a longer-term set of challenges. **New legacy organisations are often set up with time-limited funding and a requirement to generate income**. In the current funding climate, setting up a new organisation is a risk. The study heard from legacy organisations that have thrived, or are thriving, with core costs funding delivered through legacy budgets or sector funding for tourism, sport or community engagement. It also heard from organisations that are managing to survive without core funding but are finding that it is hard to generate enough income without underpinning funding.



### 5.3 Volunteer Management

Through conversations with volunteer managers, the study learned how volunteer management approaches effect volunteering legacy and volunteering infrastructure. The way in which event volunteering is set up and run has an impact on legacy.

There were limited examples of programmes explicitly aspiring to the best standards of volunteering, for example by aligning with volunteering sector frameworks for best practice or seeking to accredit their programmes. Although Hull 2017 is a particularly strong example of this approach. However, there is a lot of **evidence of volunteer managers who are learning and pushing hard for good volunteer experiences and management during the event**. Often, the study saw that volunteering programmes attached to a major event were well resourced, with sponsors providing uniforms, lunches and celebrations for volunteers as part of the experience. This was sometimes hard to continue afterwards when budgets were reduced, but volunteers who had volunteered for the first time during a major event saw this high-quality experience as standard. The study also found that event organisers had high expectations of volunteers and that volunteer needs were not being met, especially around manageable shift lengths, sufficient breaks and reasonable adjustments. Some interviewees suggested that event funders should insist on best practice standards to prevent exploitation of volunteers.

The expectations put on volunteers presented a series of significant barriers to the inclusion of disabled people or volunteers with caring responsibilities. The study found that **volunteer managers were getting better at understanding the range of adjustments needed and the importance of asking volunteers what they needed in a supportive and positive way**. However, significantly different design approaches are required to make volunteering roles accessible to people with more complex needs. In these cases, opportunities which are informed by those the programme is seeking to include, rather than only by the needs of the event itself, offer significantly more chance of inclusion. There is evidence of a range of potential barriers to volunteer programmes, from the method of the initial call out and through all the delivery phases.<sup>21</sup> On the whole, volunteer managers – and delivery vehicles – were not equipped to consider and resolve these barriers properly, which results in volunteering being made inaccessible to many groups.

**Online systems have become a significant element in the way that volunteer programmes are managed**, from recruitment to deployment. They also have considerable impact on the success of volunteer legacy plans. In general, interviewees reported that volunteer programmes are ‘leaky’ with dropouts happening at all stages of the process; for example, an initial volunteer call out that attracts thousands of enquiries may eventually result in a post-event cohort of a few hundred regular volunteers. Where there was a smooth transition of volunteer contact databases and other information from the event to the legacy vehicle, this was important to the retention of volunteers. The two complicating factors mentioned most were:

- The data-sharing permissions requested from volunteers at the start; and
- The suitability of the app or platform for post-event volunteering opportunities.

---

<sup>21</sup> For example, there is evidence that digital sign-up is a barrier for some groups, though a benefit to others.

Interviewees reported that significant losses of people came when there was a delay between the event and further contact with volunteers, or where volunteers needed to be asked permission again for their details to be shared, or had to re-register on a new platform. They also noted that legacy vehicles needed to allow time and budget for further work with software developers to ensure that their mobile app or online platform for volunteering was fit for purpose; for example, so that a number of different organisers could all post opportunities to the same platform. When done well, however, **volunteer management software is a significant asset to support post-event legacy**. Due to the UK hosting numerous major events, there are now companies with expertise in this field who can set up systems from scratch for new events or adapt existing ones.

**A key element of ensuring infrastructural legacy in some cities has been staff continuity.**

In Liverpool, Glasgow and Hull, for example, staff who were involved in the event volunteering programme are now still supporting volunteer programmes within the local government organisations or adjacent organisations, such as arm's length bodies, running local cultural and leisure facilities and activities. They hold a great deal of knowledge of how volunteering for city events has been run in the past and what works to activate existing volunteer cohorts and recruit new volunteers. Their partnerships with other organisations, both local and national, have been embedded over time. The study found, for example, that volunteer managers gained confidence from working with national governing bodies repeatedly (e.g. working with UEFA over a series of different events) and felt that the deepening of those relationships ensures they are more able to make the case for what they feel their area needs and how they would like to run their volunteer programmes.

These volunteer management infrastructures often have **well-established digital platforms for volunteer registration and management**, even where limited to event-by-event volunteer opportunities. We heard that in cities with well-developed event volunteering systems, there is a preference for incoming events to use those systems. Currently this isn't always possible as event organisers prefer to keep venues under their control. There is also a challenge around complementary volunteer programmes where the uniforms, benefits and other elements of the volunteering experience are not the same, such as, for example, where one team manages the stadium and the host city volunteers work elsewhere on visitor welcome, fan parks, etc. This study found that some positive conversations are taking place with respect to Euros 2028 to address this.

Finally, there is some evidence of **self-organised volunteer networks and signposting that arises from event volunteer programmes**. In Glasgow, the VAMOS14 Facebook group acts as a place for opportunities to be advertised (see chapter 4, section 4. 3) and similar social media groups exist elsewhere. Key to these groups is that they are not run by organisations; organisations can share opportunities to those groups, but there is a social community aspect – sharing advance information or experiences of volunteer opportunities, celebrating volunteers, keeping in touch – which also takes place on these platforms.



## 5.4 Knowledge and learning

This section explores how the role and use of knowledge and learning affects volunteering legacy and the impacts on volunteering infrastructure.

As described in the methodology (see chapter 2), this research process started by exploring evaluation reports completed at the end of events and, where possible, longer-term post-event evaluations of legacy. In some instances, this was particularly challenging. In others, there were some programmes with high quality longitudinal studies; Glasgow 2014 stood out in this regard and Hull 2017 established good feedback loops and management information. However, some events had not evaluated the volunteer programme significantly, or at all, e.g. London 2012 Games Makers and Derry 2013. Given limited budgets, priority was given to evaluation of other elements, such as the economic impact. There were disparities across the evaluations in relation to evaluating volunteering, with many carrying out end of event surveys but no baseline surveys, and a focus on volunteers' experience of the event and the immediate impact felt. There was found to be little evaluation of volunteers' pathways after the event,<sup>22</sup> of volunteering delivery, or of the impact on partners and systems. The **absence of good quality, comparable evaluation affects how well learning is transferred to future events and can make it difficult for host organisations and partners to make the case for further investment in legacy**. In some cases, this issue was further compounded by gaps in national datasets, e.g. the discontinuation of the Citizenship Survey for England and Wales post-2012.

Where evaluation was available, it was sometimes hard to locate. In cases where time limited legacy organisations and arrangements have since closed accessing the research and learning is tricky,<sup>23</sup> such as with Join In (London 2012). Many of the evaluations considered by the study were sourced via contacts and had never been published online or were hosted on out-of-date websites with broken links. The need for a repository for evaluations and learning (both published and unpublished) is addressed in this report's recommendations (see chapter 6).

Although there was limited evaluation of event volunteering programmes, particularly around infrastructure and other legacy, it was possible to source evidence of informal learning between events and locations. In many cases, cities that had been awarded City of Culture status reported visiting and being in regular contact with former Cities of Culture to learn from them, and that these visits included discussions about how to structure volunteering programmes and enhance their inclusivity, e.g. Derry had visited Liverpool and the Coventry team had been to Hull. The same was found for those hosting with international Games: Glasgow deliberately sought to learn from Manchester 2002 and London 2012 in delivering the Commonwealth Games volunteering programmes in 2014.

---

<sup>22</sup> Typically, the clearest indication of volunteers' behaviour post-event is surveys that ask volunteers about their future intent; there is some limited data from a few cases of events that returned to volunteers to ask whether they still volunteered and in what capacity.

<sup>23</sup> The Sport and Recreation Alliance holds some Join In assets, but they are not easily accessible via its search engine.

In general the study **identified a need for further consideration of what needs to take place for learning to happen and at what levels**. There is clearly value in strategic and operational teams learning from each other and a need for funders and strategic bodies to be part of the conversation. This includes:

- Event franchise owners, such as the International Olympic Committee and FIFA.
- National government bodies and arms-length bodies, such as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, UK Sport, Sport England, the arts councils, etc.
- National governing bodies for sports.
- Cities and other locations planning to bid for events.
- The wider voluntary sector, which is not necessarily well connected to learning from event volunteering.

**There is still the perception that volunteering programmes need to make the case – to policymakers and funders – for their value and why they need proper investment.** This is the case despite a body of consistent evidence on volunteers' motivation to participate and the personal impact of their volunteering experience.

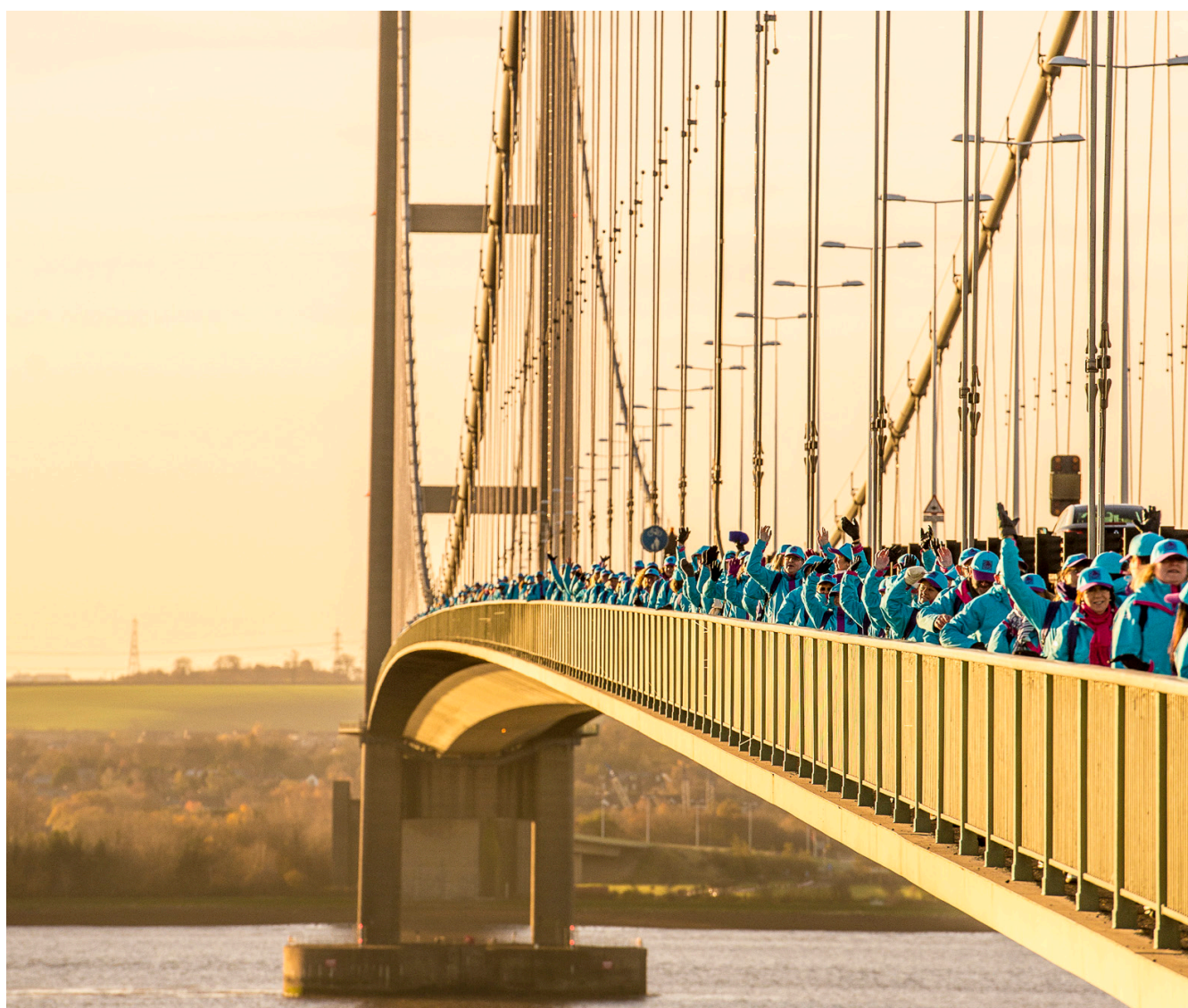


Photo: Hull 2017 volunteers. Credit: Leo Francis

## 5.5 Policy and funding

This section discusses how policy and funding affects volunteering legacy and the impacts on volunteering infrastructure. The study found across the sector there are challenges to maintaining the momentum from successful event volunteering programmes and building on them beyond the event. Many of these challenges are rooted in the complex funding landscape for volunteering in the UK.

Firstly, the interviews highlighted that there are **significant challenges in the funding and capacity of the existing volunteering infrastructure, both local and specialist infrastructure, limiting the voluntary sector's ability to engage with and support event volunteering programmes**. Many of the events considered in detail by the study took place against a backdrop of recession, rising costs and public sector funding cuts. Voluntary sector organisations who had supported major events reported that they were unable to secure funding to sustain event volunteering teams afterwards and that they were also facing cuts to their core funding.

Additionally, there is no strong evidence that the initial investment in volunteers returns significantly to the wider voluntary sector in the form of a better trained or more active voluntary workforce, e.g. training volunteer cohorts. This reflects the specific nature of event volunteering and both the motivations of event volunteers and the training they receive in those roles. People who have participated in event volunteering tend to emerge from the experience as more confident and skilled event volunteers, though they do not necessarily have the motivation, the skills or the awareness of what's available to take up other forms of volunteering. While it is possible for local voluntary sector organisations to engage this cohort at the end of the event and offer other opportunities, they would need additional resource (volunteer management and training capacity in particular) and access to the volunteer contact database.

In many cases local authorities were not able to step in to manage cohorts of volunteers themselves or to fund another organisation to do so as they lacked funds and capacity. Where funding was available to develop legacy volunteering, it was often restricted and time limited. In some cases, it was placed with an organisation best placed to manage funding, rather than best placed to run a volunteering programme.

Where organisations and programmes were able to secure time-limited funding from funders such as Spirit of 2012 and Sport England, they could not secure alternative funding when that ran out. Interviewees reported that **funding for volunteering programmes is very limited and competitive**. Much of the available funding for strategic growth and development of volunteering is targeted in other areas and is not a good fit for event volunteering programmes. Given this landscape, the continuation of so many volunteering programmes in some form after events is testament to the commitment of organisations to be resourceful and creative and to underwrite gaps in funding themselves so they can keep cohorts of volunteers active. There were also examples of patchy funding leading to the loss of experienced staff through redundancy.



Post-event legacy funding for volunteering is often **based on an assumption that the organisation that takes responsibility for the volunteer cohort during an event will create a viable business model to self-sustain the cohort afterwards**, potentially growing it through the delivery of volunteering services at more events. We heard that organisations with responsibility for legacy (social enterprises, voluntary sector organisations or legacy delivery vehicles) struggled when legacy funding ran out. It was hard to charge event organisers enough for volunteer recruitment and management services to be able to cover all the costs of maintaining the cohort, including staffing, software development, refresher training, social activities and rewards and provision of kit.

This **lack of post-event legacy funding for volunteering has a particularly significant impact on organisations working with people who have barriers to participation**. Where organisations focus on supporting people with additional needs, the preferred model is that it works with that community consistently over time. Events provide them with an additional boost in new, bespoke and well-resourced volunteering opportunities that are delivered in partnership with the organising body alongside appropriate levels of funding. Patchy core funding significantly affected these organisations' ability to access event volunteering opportunities for the groups they work with or to embed legacy for the volunteers in the form of further volunteering, movement into training or employment opportunities. The key challenge here is that volunteers continue to require additional support beyond the event in many cases, but legacy funding is often unavailable for diversification of partner organisations that can provide this ongoing support.

Despite funding challenges, interviewees with international experience reported that the UK is a good place to develop volunteering programmes. There is a strong culture of voluntary action, residents of towns and cities are highly motivated by civic pride and there is a high level of enthusiasm for sport and the arts. Alongside this, there is extensive experience of running major events held in towns and cities across the country and a significant body of knowledge potentially accessible and beneficial to others (although there is much which could be done to share learning more effectively, see section 5.4). **The UK is a leader in the volunteering space and could be an international exemplar with appropriate policy support.**

There is evidence in some cases of significant political capital being built to support volunteer programmes at local and regional level (e.g. Hull 2017, Manchester 2002 and after). The study found that where local and/or regional authorities were providing strategic support for volunteering they articulated the benefits as being:

- Provision of additional capacity for community-based sports, arts and engagement programmes.
- Improved health and wellbeing and reduced social isolation both for volunteers and more widely from working in their community.
- Improved community cohesion resulting from bringing together people with diverse characteristics to work towards a common goal.
- Volunteering opportunities as the first step on a pathway to skills development, training and paid employment.
- Existence of a skilled and experienced volunteer cohort as a strategic asset in bringing new events to the city.

## 5.6 Impact of COVID-19

Given the range of events and time period looked at for this study, it is important to recognise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. **COVID-19 had a significant effect on a number of volunteer legacy programmes and upon the wider volunteering infrastructure.** Interviewees told of several ways in which their events and their pre-2020 volunteering legacy programmes had been impacted by COVID-19. These included:

- Pre-2020 events with a legacy volunteering programme found that many volunteers left during the pandemic and it was hard to engage the cohort without any events for them to volunteer in. For earlier events, this was exacerbated by the fact that the cohort was already ageing (for example Liverpool's 2008 Volunteers were twelve years older when COVID-19 hit, Glasgow's 2014 Commonwealth Games volunteers had been volunteering for six years). Where cohorts include a large number of active retirees, there is a drop off after a few years due to ageing, ill health, caring responsibilities, etc. COVID-19 sped up this natural churn.
- Other volunteering cohorts established before 2020 were able to attract new volunteers and to widen the scope of their activities. For example, in Northern Ireland, event volunteers were tasked with working in testing and vaccination centres and later took on a role in welcoming Ukrainian refugees.
- Events that were due to take place during the pandemic were rescheduled and had longer lead-in times or were extensively remodelled to allow for pandemic restrictions. This had a mixed impact on volunteer cohorts, in some cases allowing for additional community-based activity, in others reducing the demand for volunteer labour.



**The next chapter of this report summarises the headline findings of this study, and makes recommendations for future planning, action and research.**



Photo: Liverpool Volunteers for the Eurovision Song Contest 2023. Credit: 3001 Media, Culture Liverpool, Liverpool City Council

# 6. Key learning and recommendations



## 6. Key learning and recommendations

This study was commissioned to find out how events have worked, or could have worked, to strengthen the volunteering infrastructure. What it has identified is that the main way in which events strengthen the volunteering infrastructure is to create new infrastructure to develop event volunteering programmes and opportunities within the period of the event; and to continue some elements of that in an ongoing way, or to repeat these event volunteering programmes on an event-by-event basis. By hosting events with volunteer programmes, **places and governing bodies strengthen their capacity – in terms of people, systems and processes and knowledge and learning – to run more event volunteer programmes in the future, including city welcome style programmes**, and to improve and refine those programmes each time.

A range of positive outcomes are evident for volunteers who participate in event volunteer programmes and a variety of structures and formats are successful in supporting both immediate outcomes and longer-term legacies. There is strong evidence that volunteers who are motivated by the experiential benefits – being involved in something exciting and big – find those experiences meaningful and often go on to volunteer at other events. These are important outcomes that should be celebrated.

There is also evidence that stakeholders, including local policymakers and funders, often have ambitions for event volunteer programmes that are not realised. This study has found some examples of event volunteer programmes and their legacies achieving engagement with diverse groups, supporting volunteers to develop skills which will support them into employment, and using events and event volunteer programmes to encourage other kinds of volunteering. These examples are, however, limited; and there is evidence of significant tension between policy aspirations and the way in which event volunteer programmes are planned and delivered.

It is not the role of this study to identify the kinds of legacies event organisers or places hosting events should seek for volunteer programmes. Neither do we think that all event volunteer programmes should have the same ambitions. We can, however, identify some key recommendations to enable policymakers, event organisers, and local and national volunteering stakeholders to think about how to close the gap between what they want event volunteer programmes and their legacies to achieve, and what they do achieve.



# 1

## Recommendation 1: Be clear and realistic about the objectives of event volunteer programmes

An issue that emerges most clearly where longitudinal evaluation has been built into event volunteer programmes is the mismatch between initial policy and stakeholder expectations, and what an event volunteer programme is able to achieve. Across the events reviewed, the most common issue for programmes relates to the range of volunteers that are recruited and retained.

There are excellent examples of events designing specific elements of their volunteer programme to engage with volunteers from groups that may not typically get involved through open recruitment. In some cases, these examples also seek specific outcomes for that group (e.g. developing skills and confidence to support future employability). Where these have been successful they:

- Have clear, specific and focused objectives to target and work with those groups.
- Typically engage with existing parts of the voluntary infrastructure, or wider partners who have significant and specialist experience and knowledge of the groups they want to work with and what appropriate and meaningful volunteer opportunities would be for that group.
- Recognise that this work requires a different level of resource to typical event volunteer programmes and allocate resources accordingly.

**Where those bidding and planning for events with volunteer programmes have ambitions to engage specific groups, or a wider range of participants, they must plan deliberately and realistically to do so.**

# 2

## Recommendation 2: Build on existing knowledge and capacity

Whilst the study found informal and formal exchanges of learning between events (e.g. between Commonwealth Games host cities, and UK City of Culture host cities), typically there was less evidence of temporary event delivery vehicles successfully learning from the existing volunteering infrastructure. There is some evidence of longer-term relationships between governing bodies or NGOs and host cities or areas supporting a better exchange of knowledge and more meaningful planning discussions.

Despite this, there is also evidence of events not building substantially on learning from other events, whether due to the availability of detailed evaluations and reviews, challenges in building learning into design and planning phases or expectations from local policymakers and stakeholders. The hope is that this study will add to the learning that is currently available and advocate that **those bidding for and planning for events must take the time to learn what has and hasn't worked for previous event volunteer programmes.**

In areas where there is substantial local volunteering infrastructure, or in events where national governing bodies, NGOs or other national volunteering infrastructure organisations have relevant knowledge, expertise and agendas, it is crucial that **those designing and planning for event volunteer programmes bring this knowledge and capacity to the table.** Those potential partners must be ready to contribute and those bidding and planning for events must be ready to involve them in a meaningful way in developing aspirations and plans for volunteer programmes.

### 3

**Recommendation 3:** Plan in advance for legacy, including what model or approach will deliver the legacy

A crucial issue in almost all the events looked at is the absence of detailed planning for legacy outcomes. This often stems from the issue identified in Recommendation 1 – the absence of detailed planning for volunteer programme outcomes. The first challenge in relation to planning for legacy is ensuring that the policy ambitions are based on realistic assumptions: that **the proposition for legacy is one which is feasible, given the planned volunteer programme.**

Following this, two further challenges are evident:

- Who will be responsible for legacy, particularly if delivery is taking place via a temporary vehicle?
- Who will fund legacy for a sufficient period of time?

**In early event bidding and planning discussions there must be determinations about who is able to take responsibility for legacy and who is able to fund that legacy.** If policymakers and funders wish to see legacy, or wish to encourage it, they should consider ring-fencing funding for legacy activities.

### 4

**Recommendation 4:** Ensure that event volunteer programmes model best practice in designing and delivering volunteer opportunities

Whilst the study learnt about the challenges of trying to deliver ambitious event volunteer programmes to budget, it also found from those engaged in wider volunteering that event volunteer programmes are, comparatively, well-resourced, at least for the period of the event. There are some excellent examples of event volunteer programmes that have worked very hard to place emphasis on the quality of the volunteer opportunity and experience, and similarly ensured that the volunteer management reflects best practice. This has not been the case for all event volunteer programmes, however. When there are considerations of how infrastructure can be strengthened by event volunteer programmes, a key element is the quality of the volunteer opportunity and management practice that event volunteer programmes can demonstrate and the potential for this good practice to become established as standard in future volunteering programmes.

Given the range of stakeholders involved and profile of these volunteer programmes, **funders and policymakers should place emphasis on ensuring that event volunteer programmes reflect best volunteering practice.** Funders and policymakers could also be more joined-up in their thinking about what good volunteering looks like; for example, it would be beneficial if the National Lottery family of funders could articulate thinking across the different funds to potential event volunteer programmes and their legacies.

It would also be valuable to engage with the wider volunteering infrastructure to understand what that means, understand the body of work on best practice in inclusive volunteering that already exists and encourage those bidding and planning for events to engage with this infrastructure. This may also mean supporting discussions between governing bodies and host cities/areas that are seeking to develop how volunteer programmes are run and ensure that the quality of the volunteer opportunity gains the importance in planning and thinking that it deserves.

Recommendation 4 suggests that stakeholders bidding and planning for events with volunteer programmes have a responsibility to go out and learn about what has and hasn't work for other event volunteer programmes. In the course of this study, it has been challenging in some instances to reconstruct learning from past events. Websites are not maintained, temporary delivery or legacy vehicles are closed, staff move on. Some programmes were never evaluated at all, or in detail, and few evaluations include any longitudinal element. Those who deliver volunteer programmes, and who are involved in delivery of volunteer legacy learn a lot about how to do this effectively and, in some cases, they take this rich learning on to subsequent roles in volunteer management; but this learning is dependent on individual staff members.

**There is a clear need to encourage better formal evaluation and learning and to ensure that it can be available beyond the end of temporary infrastructures.** Policymakers and funders engaged in supporting events should be advocating strongly for the former but, at present, it is not clear who might be able to fulfil the latter responsibility.

Spirit of 2012 undertook valuable feasibility work on a possible Events Data Observatory, the findings of which are important and should be considered further (FRY Creative, 2024).<sup>24</sup> There are also existing examples of data repository, or resources which go beyond this to curate and provide overviews of these kinds of materials (e.g. the Evaluation Learning Space created by the Centre for Cultural Value<sup>25</sup>). Spirit of 2012-commissioned research undertaken by the Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, makes a number of recommendations aimed at enabling better knowledge production and transfer from major events, and at supporting more meaningful post-event and legacy periods (Neelands, Beer et al., 2024). We find that these recommendations for all aspects of major events are very much in keeping with what this study has found in relation to event volunteer programmes and their legacies.

This study brings together a range of learning from a number of events and would not have been possible without the kind and generous contributions of interviewees and those who shared evaluations and other material with us. The hope is that this report supports those who are thinking about, bidding and planning for event volunteer programmes, and those local and national organisations and stakeholders who want great volunteer opportunities to be a key part of how events are delivered.

<sup>24</sup> The feasibility study is available here: <https://spiritof2012.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Spirit-of-2012-Events-Data-Observatory-Feasibility-Report-for-print.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> The Evaluation Learning Space is a pilot project which demonstrates the value of not only holding a range of evaluation and other material, but curating it, providing overviews and digests, and examining its value. It is a partnership project between the Centre for Cultural Value and CultureHive, the Arts Marketing Association's knowledge hub, and was funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The first round of resources focuses on the UK City of Culture programme.



Photo: Huit 2017 volunteers. Credit: Leo Francis

# 7. Appendices



# Appendix A: List of interviewees

Relevant event	Name	Role
Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games	James Grinsted	Head of Programmes, United by 2022; former Youth Programmes Manager, Birmingham 2022.
Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games	Andy Newman	Head of Volunteer Management, FIFA; former Director of Workforce and Volunteering, Birmingham 2022.
Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games	Cat Orchard	Head of Commonwealth Games Legacy Enhancement Fund, West Midlands Combined Authority
Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games	Dave Wagg	Head of Sport and Physical Activity, Birmingham City Council
Bradford UK City of Culture 2025	Gail Smith	Evaluation Manager, Bradford 2025
Coventry UK City of Culture 2021	David Boughey	Managing Director, EnV
Derry UK City of Culture 2013	Denise Hayward	Chief Executive Officer, Volunteer Now
Derry UK City of Culture 2014	Oonagh McGillion	Director of Legacy, Derry City Council
Derry UK City of Culture 2015	Jacqui Garnon	Centre Manager, North West Volunteer Centre
Festivals Edinburgh	Marion Findlay	Director of Services, Volunteer Edinburgh
Festivals Edinburgh	Julia Amour	Director, Festivals Edinburgh
First World War Centenary Commemorations 1914-1918	Nigel Hinds	Associate Director, Festival and Events International; former Executive Producer, 14-18 NOW/Imperial War Museum
Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games	Claire Shiel	Volunteer Manager, Glasgow City Council; former Administration Manager - Host City Volunteer Project Glasgow 2014, Glasgow Life; and ran volunteer programmes for Glasgow City Council/Glasgow Life at a range of events including World Athletics Indoor Championships Glasgow 2024 and UCI Cycling World Championships 2023.

Relevant event	Name	Role
Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games	Paul Zealey	Skills Planning Lead, Skills Development Scotland; former Head of Engagement and Legacy, Glasgow 2014.
Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games	Professor Gayle McPherson	Professor of Events and Cultural Policy, University of the West of Scotland
Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games	Alan Stevenson	Chief Executive Officer, Volunteer Scotland
Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games	David Maxwell	Chief Executive, Volunteer Glasgow
Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games	Dr Robert Rogerson	Academic Director, Institute for Future Cities, University of Strathclyde; and Trustee and Board Member, Volunteer Scotland.
Hull UK City of Culture 2017	Shaun Crummey	Strategy Lead, Buzz Wireless Networks; former Head of Volunteering, Hull 2017
Hull UK City of Culture 2017	Abi Bell	Volunteer Programme Manager, Visit Hull and East Yorkshire
Hull UK City of Culture 2018	Daniel Wheeler	Senior Destination Officer, Visit Hull and East Yorkshire
Hull UK City of Culture 2019	Kath Wynne-Hague	Head of Culture, Place and City Centre, Hull City Council
Hull UK City of Culture 2020	Katie Atkins	Engagement Producer, Freedom Festival Arts Trust
Hull UK City of Culture 2021	Kersty Smith	Sector Services Manager, Hull CVS
Hull UK City of Culture 2022	Sophie Batrup	Community Development Manager, HEY Smile Foundation
Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008	Jen Falding	Strategic Lead for Major Sports Events, Liverpool City Council; former Relationship/Operations Manager, Liverpool Culture Company
Liverpool European Capital of Culture 2008	Susan Gibson	Head of City Events; former Senior Event Manager, Liverpool Culture Company
London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games	Gethyn Williams	Freelance; former Head of Partnerships, The Join In Trust
London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games	Mark Wardman	Major Events and Volunteering Manager, Civil Society & Sport at Greater London Authority
London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games	Bill Morris LVO DL	Senior Expert Advisor, International Olympic Committee; former Director, LOCOG

Relevant event	Name	Role
London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games	Nick Fuller	Trustee, Spirit of 2012; former Head of Education, LOCOG
London 2017 - World Para Athletics Championships and IAAF World Championships	Emma Davenport	Head of Clubs and Participation, England Athletics
Manchester International Festival/ Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 inheritance	Lee Ashworth	Volunteer Manager, Factory International
Manchester International Festival/ Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 inheritance	Kate Glynn	Volunteer Co-ordinator, Manchester Museum
Manchester International Festival/ Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 inheritance	Chris Martin	Managing Director, Team Kinetic
Manchester International Festival/ Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 inheritance	Phil Clarke	Club and Neighbourhood Sport Manager, Manchester Active
Manchester International Festival/ Manchester Commonwealth Games 2002 inheritance	Claire Troup	Project Manager, Manchester Volunteer Inspire Programme, Manchester City Council
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Liz Ellis	Policy Project Manager, Business Innovation and Insight, National Lottery Heritage Fund
Norfolk and Norwich Festival	Radosava Radulovic	Office Manager, Norfolk and Norwich Festival
Rugby League World Cup 2021	John Hughes	Director of Partnerships and Communities at Community Integrated Care
Rugby League World Cup 2021	Darby Sladden	Volunteer and Social Impact Officer, Rugby Football League
Sport England	Kristen Natale	Head of Volunteering, Sport England
UEFA Women's Euros 2022	Susan Couper	Senior Workforce Manager, The Football Association
Unboxed	Yasmin Damji	Director, Fry Creative; former Head of Evaluation, Unboxed2022

# Appendix B: Bibliography

Absolutely Cultured (2018) 'Volunteer Programme Evaluation Report'. Hull, Absolutely Cultured.

Absolutely Cultured (2021) 'Volunteering Programme Evaluation Report. Prepared for Spirit of 2012'. Hull, Absolutely Cultured.

Birmingham 2022 (2022) 'Legacy Plan'. Birmingham.

Derry City and Strabane District Council (2025) 'Inclusive Strategic Growth Plan 2017 - 2032. Updated 2025'. Derry.

Derry City and Strabane District Council (No date) 'Post Project Evaluation of City of Culture 2013. Final Report'. Londonderry.

England Athletics (No date) 'Team Spirit. End of Project Impact and Learning Report'. Birmingham, England Athletics.

FRY Creative (2024) 'Events Data Observatory Feasibility Report'. London, Spirit of 2012. <https://spiritof2012.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Spirit-of-2012-Events-Data-Observatory-Feasibility-Report-for-print.pdf>.

FRY Creative (2024) 'United By 2022. Interim Evaluation Report'. Birmingham.

Fujiwara, D., R. Lawton and W. Watt (2018) 'Givers. Using behavioural science to recruit and retain volunteers more effectively'. London, Sport and Recreation Alliance.

Goodform (2019) 'Researching Major Event Volunteering. Executive Summary'. London, Sport England.

Join In (No date) 'Hidden diamonds. Uncovering the true value of sport volunteers'. London, Join In.

KPMG, 4Global and S. Chen (2024) 'Evaluation of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. One Year Post-Games Evaluation Report'. Birmingham.

Lockstone-Binney, L., K. Holmes, R. Shipway and K. A. Smith (2016) 'Evaluating the volunteering infrastructure legacy of the Olympic Games: Sydney 2000 and London 2012'. Switzerland, International Olympic Committee Olympic Studies Centre.

Morrison, A. and J. Thompson (2018) 'Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Legacy: Final Evaluation Report'. Edinburgh, Scottish Government.

Nedvetskaya, O. and V. Girginov (2017) 'Volunteering legacy of the London 2012 Olympics'. *Legacies and Mega Events. Fact or Fairy Tales?* I. Brittain, J. Bocarro, T. Byers and K. Swart. London, Routledge

Neelands, J., H. Beer, M. Scott, A. Dixon and E. Smith (2024) 'Creating the golden thread. An ambition for major events in the UK'. London.

Nichols, G. and R. Ralston (2012) 'Lessons for the Volunteering Legacy of the 2002 Commonwealth Games'. *Urban Studies* 49: 169-194.

Nichols, G. S., R. Ralston and K. Holmes (2017) 'The 2012 Olympic Ambassadors and sustainable tourism legacy'. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 25(11): 1513-1528.

Rogerson, R., A. Pavoni and T. Duncan (No date) 'Participating as a Host City Volunteer: perspectives from those involved in the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games'. Glasgow, University of Strathclyde.

Rogerson, R., F. Reid, B. Sly and R. Nicholson (2018) 'Three years on - the impact of being a Host City Volunteer at the 2014 Commonwealth Games'. Glasgow, University of Strathclyde and Glasgow Caledonian University.

Rogerson, R. J., F. Reid and R. Nicholson (2021) 'Creating an event volunteering legacy: the 2014 host city volunteer initiative'. *Event Management* 25: 641-651.

Shipway, R., L. Lockstone-Binney, K. Holmes and K. A. Smith (2020) 'Perspectives on the volunteering legacy of the London 2012 Olympic Games: the development of an event legacy stakeholder engagement matrix'. *Event Management* 24: 645-659.

The Sports Consultancy, Nielsen Sports, Gracenote and PCSG (No date) 'London 2017 World Para Athletics Championships and IAAF World Championships. Event Impact Report'. London.

UK Government and Mayor of London (2013) 'Inspired by 2012: The legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games'. London, UK Government.

Woodall, J., J. South, K. Southby, K. Kinsella, E. May, A.-M. Bagnall and S. Coan (2016) 'Exploring the experiences and impact of volunteer applicants for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games'. Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Beckett University.

Yates, G. and R. Jones (2018) 'Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games clyde-sider study: a synthesis of the learning'. Glasgow, Glasgow Centre for Population Health.



BIRMINGHAM  
LIGHT  
FESTIVAL

Information

TICKETS

Tickets



Photo: Hull 2017 volunteers. Credit: Absolutely Cultured



Photo: Try Force volunteer, Rugby Football League. Credit: Rugby Football League.



Photo: Birmingham Festival volunteers. Credit: United by 2022



Photo: Birmingham 2022 Volunteer. Credit: United by 2022



Photo: Glasgow volunteers at UCI World Cycling Championships 2023. Credit: Glasgow Life/SNS iStock

A teal silhouette of a person wearing a high-visibility vest, holding a teal rectangular sign with white text. The sign is tilted slightly to the right.

**A Lasting  
Impact?**