

## London 2012 Games Makers: Towards Redefining Legacy

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**Dr Angela M Benson** is a Principal Lecturer in Tourism at the School Sport and Service Management, University of Brighton where she has been since January 2004 having previously held the position of Senior Lecturer at the Southampton SOLENT University (1995 – 2004). Due to the research undertaken with Australian colleagues on examining the motivations and legacy of volunteers at the Olympics; Angela was made an Adjunct Associate Professor of the University of Canberra, Australia in 2009. Prior to her career as an academic, she worked for 13 years in leisure and recreation, managing a range of facilities and events. Angela has published over 30 articles and chapters in the areas of Volunteering, (Tourism and Mega Events), Management, Best Value, Sustainability and Research Methods. She is the Founding Chair of the Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) Volunteer Tourism Research Group, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society with IBG and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

Angela's research area of volunteering primarily falls into two key areas: (1) Volunteer Tourism - much of this research has been conducted with collaboration from organisations in the UK volunteer tourism sector and is a continuation of her PhD research. As a result of this research she became the Chair of the ATLAS Volunteer Tourism Research Group; (2) Volunteers at Mega Sport Events - this second area of research has been in association with Australian / Canadian colleagues. The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has approved research projects twice (Vancouver 2010 and London 2012). Email: [A.M.Benson@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:A.M.Benson@brighton.ac.uk)

### Research highlights:

- Most volunteers indicated that they felt they had developed skills as a result of London 2012 that could be applied in other volunteering and paid employment situations;
- Respondents were highly satisfied with their London 2012 volunteering experiences;

- Nearly half indicated that they expected to increase their volunteering levels over their pre-Games levels

### **Research rationale:**

Volunteering is an essential aspect of many mega-sporting events with stakeholder rhetoric suggesting that it is desirable and that these events will leave a 'volunteering legacy' beyond the Games and are therefore, actively promoted as such. For London 2012 it has, in part, been expressed as 'work with our partners will create a new volunteering spirit, an improved volunteer network with more opportunities and better training for those who want to give their most important commodity – time.' (LOCOG, 2009). Further, DCMS indicate that the Games would lead to a new culture of community volunteering in the future (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2012).

This research builds upon research conducted at the Sydney World Masters Games, 2009 and the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games which explored the motives, experiences and legacy of volunteering at mega sport events in order to inform future mega sporting events on how best to support the creation of a social legacy for hosting communities and organisations.

There are a range of publication related to this previous research (Dickson, Benson, Blackman & Terwiel, In press; Dickson, Benson & Blackman, 2011; Dickson, Terwiel & Benson, 2011); plus a number of conference presentations / papers (Benson & Blackman, 2011; Benson, Blackman & Dickson, 2011; Benson, Dickson & Blackman, 2011; Blackman, Benson & Dickson, 2011; Dickson, 2010, 2011; Dickson, Darcy, Benson & Terwiel, 2013; Dickson, Edwards & Darcy, 2009; Dickson, Edwards, Darcy, Benson & Blackman, 2010; Edwards, Dickson & Darcy, 2009; Terwiel, 2009).

### **Research questions included:**

1. Who were the Games Makers (volunteers)?
2. Why did they volunteer (their motivations)?
3. What functional area were they engaged in?
4. What were the main skills developed as a result of their experience?
5. What was the level of their satisfaction of the London 2012 experience?
6. What were their intentions after London 2012, in terms of, volunteering in the future?

### **Research design:**

The research utilised a mixed methods approach including both an online survey and interviews (face-to-face and telephone). The initial research design sought to replicate and build upon the previous research whereby an invitation to participate in an online survey would be sent out prior to the Games in order to measure pre-Games motivations, however this was not possible and the survey was distributed to all London 2012 volunteers two days after the Paralympics and one day after the thank-you parade through the streets of London.

The interviews were conducted throughout the Games period across a range of venues, transport hubs and a variety of public spaces such as live sites and parks.

## Results:

After 5 days, 11,451 responses had been received to the online survey distributed by LOCOG's Research Department, 70% worked during the Olympics and 38% during the Paralympics. Of all respondents 59% were female compared to 57%<sup>1</sup> for all Game Makers. The majority had previously volunteered prior to the Games (80%), with 71% having volunteered in the 12 months prior to the Games, although DCMS suggested that 40% of applicants had indicated that London 2012 would be their first time to volunteer (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2012). Nearly a third of respondents were from households that earned over £50,000 gross income per annum, well above the national average. This may reflect the fact that 50% were in full time employment in the month prior to the Games. Those who were retired or pensioners accounted for a further 20% of respondents, followed by part time or casually employed (15%).

While those under 25 years of age represented 23% of all Games Makers, this was only 11% of the survey respondents. In the survey sample volunteers were more likely to be over the age of 45 years (62%) (Table 1).

**Table 1 Age range**

Age Range	Sample n=11,45 1 %	All Games Makers %
16 – 24	11%	23%
25 – 34	13%	18%
35 – 44	15%	14%
45 – 54	24%	18%
55 – 64	27%	19%
65 +	11%	8%

Just over two thirds of All Games Makers originated from London (34%), the South East (21%) or the east of England (13%). Just 2% were from each of Scotland and Wales (Table 2).

**Table 2 Region of origin**

Region	Sample n=11,45 1 %	All Games Makers %
London	29%	34%
South East	29%	21%
East of England	8%	13%
South West	8%	6%
West Midlands	5%	5%
North West	4%	4%
Yorkshire and The Humber	4%	4%
East Midlands	4%	4%
Scotland	2%	2%

<sup>1</sup> Summary demographics were provided by LOCOG at the completion of the survey

Wales	2%	2%
North East	1%	1%
Northern Ireland	1%	1%
Channel Islands/Isle of Man	0%	0%
Non-UK	3%	3%

Eighty per cent of respondents identified as being of a 'white British' ethnic group with a further 8% indicating that would identify as 'any other white background'. Just 6% would identify as of being of an Asian ethnic group, while 2% would identify as having a black Caribbean or African ethnic group.

Recruiting people with a disability was a key objective for LOCOG, 4% of the total database indicated they had a disability, while 7% of the survey respondents indicated having access requirements. This is well below the approximately 19% of Great Britain living with disability (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). Further analysis of people who identified as having access needs is considered in a forthcoming paper (Benson, Dickson, & Darcy, In review).

From a list of 36 motivation items ranked on a scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) the top five items focus upon the centrality of the Games to the volunteers' motivations (Table 3).

**Table 3 Top five motivation items**

Motivation items	Mean
5. It was the chance of a lifetime	4.86
30. I wanted to help make the Games a success	
20. I am interested in the Games	4.57
18. I wanted to be associated with the Games	4.54
4. I wanted to do something worthwhile	4.47

During the Games nearly half of the survey respondents were tasked in either Event Services or Transport out of 51 identified functional areas (Table 4).

**Table 4 Top five functional areas**

Functional Area	Olympic s	Paralympi cs
Event Services	27%	31%
Transport	19%	16%
Security	6%	5%
Sports	6%	6%
Protocol and languages	6%	5%

From a list of 22 skill areas, the five main skills that respondents considered that they had greatly developed as a result of their London 2012 volunteering experience were: customer service skills (31%); teamwork skills (29%); communication skills (27%); interpersonal skills (25%) and the ability to work under pressure (21%). The majority

considered that they would be able to apply their suite of enhanced skills in other volunteering situations (82%) as well as in their paid employment (57%).

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their London 2012 volunteer experience, of which 92% were either satisfied or very satisfied.

Of all respondents, 45% indicated that they expected to increase the volunteering over their volunteering levels in the 12 months prior to the Games, with 5% indicating they would do less. Volunteers who would proportionally increase their volunteering were female, those aged 19-44 years and those who did not volunteer in the previous 12 months. As expected, those who were in full-time employment or fulltime students indicated that they would increase their volunteering, while those who were employed casually or part time or those who were retired indicated (proportionally) they would do the same or less volunteering. Those volunteers who worked in the functional area of transport had proportionately more than any other functional area indicated they would do the same or less volunteering. When examining the satisfaction levels, only those who were very satisfied with their volunteer experience (61%) indicated, proportionately more, that they would increase their volunteering.

Future sport events where people would consider volunteering again include the World Athletics Championships 2017 (47%), the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games (45%), Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games (36%), and the England and Wales 2015 Rugby League World Cup (31%).

### **Discussion:**

It is important to recall that this research was undertaken immediately after the conclusion of a very successful Games for London and the UK, in terms of the medal count, in the way the Games were conducted and also in the level of public and media support. In this 'after glow' volunteers' enthusiasm for future volunteering may be much higher and may be tempered in the future by the realities or returning to already busy work and personal lives which, for most, already included volunteering roles before the Games.

While many were motivated by the uniqueness of the event itself rather than any altruistic focus on giving back to their community, many believed that they had developed skills that they could apply in future volunteering and work situations which may result in a social legacy for the community. The majority were highly satisfied with their volunteer experiences, and nearly half indicated that they expected to increase their volunteering levels which could include several major sports events that are to be conducted in the UK in the next few years.

The challenge for London and the UK, and indeed other mega events, is how to maximise the potential social legacy of volunteering that is suggested by the responses presented here. What will be important to capture is not the expression of people indicating they will volunteer more but the action of Games Makers transferring the skills and experiences of London 2012 into smaller, local events and activities. As noted by Sir Charles Allen, Chair of LOCOG's Nations and Regions Group, in March 2012, 'those volunteering at London 2012 will leave their mark on the event – what's important is that they make a commitment to volunteer beyond 2012, so we can leave a mark on communities for years to come' (Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2012, p. 79). Consequently, it is essential that future research be conducted to track

the London 2012 Games Makers and their impacts upon the volunteering communities to explore the real social legacies beyond the Games.

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