

Exploring the experiences and impacts of volunteer applicants for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games

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Overarching Aims

To summarise relevant research on the experiences and impacts of volunteering for a mega-sporting event.

To explore experiences and impacts of those who volunteered as a clyde-sider for the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

To explore experiences and impacts of those who applied to volunteer as a clyde-sider but were not successful or withdrew their application (non-clyde-sider).



Gathering Evidence

- Focus groups to 'replicate' communal nature of volunteering and to foster shared experience.
- Sampling frame derived from GCPH baseline questionnaire of volunteers.
- 3 cities in Scotland hosted 11 FGD (n=41 – 6 non-clyde-siders).
- Interviews with 11 people living outside of Scotland.



The Volunteer Journey



The Volunteer Journey (1)

- Motivation to apply:
 - The 'Games Makers'.
 - The opportunity to participate in a unique and prestigious event that was unlikely to return to Scotland during their lifetime.



The Volunteer Journey (2)

- Application & Interview:
 - Variability in experiences.
 - Non-clyde-siders reported being unclear as to why they had not been selected to take part in the Games. Individual feedback was not routinely given and the lack of clarity in how decisions were made was a frustration for some.

"The fact that there was no feedback, I don't think there was any feedback with the interview, so there was no sort of 'this was good', like your usual, typical pointers like 'you were good here and you were good here.'" (Focus Group 3 – non-clyde-sider)



The Volunteer Journey (3)



Individual outcomes for volunteers

- Clyde-siders consistently described the immediate growth of their social networks.
- 'Bridging' with others across social and cultural boundaries.

"Another thing about Central Scotland, certainly Falkirk where I'm from, is we're not a particularly diverse nation. We were very much a white community that I'm from. So for these young guys, and even for myself as well, it was the first opportunity to interact with people of different cultures."
(Focus Group 2 – clyde-sider)



Individual outcomes for volunteers

- One common theme throughout the data was the way that participation at the Games had increased clyde-sider's confidence.
- These gains were especially reported in interpersonal communication and interaction with people.
- Clyde-siders & non-clyde-siders who were unemployed or in education suggested that the experience would be beneficial to their future employment prospects.



Individual outcomes for volunteers

- 'Buzz' and euphoria



Wider social outcomes

- The experience of being involved in the Games (either as a clyde-sider or non-clyde-sider) had stimulated and encouraged people to continue to volunteer in the future.
- Some were keen to volunteer at mega-sporting events, but acknowledged the personal costs.



Wider social outcomes

- Volunteers suggested enhancing the reputation of Glasgow – challenging previous stereotypes.
- Greater sense of community spirit and cohesion both during the Games and for a period of time after the Games had finished.
- The positive way in which the volunteers had represented the city and made visitors welcome was one example which participants felt would stimulate future tourism.



What does it all mean...?

- There is a relationship between the act of taking part in a voluntary activity, the place and the social context generated by hosting the Games.
- It is this relationship that appears to be key to understanding health and wellbeing impacts from the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.



Study limitations

- 1 year post-Games - the timing of this study may have led to more positive views being expressed and negative experiences being less prominent.
- Sample - limited to individuals who had already committed to taking part in further research.
- Challenges in recruiting non-clyde-siders (the number of non-clyde-siders who participated was lower than anticipated).
- Challenges in distinguishing impacts arising from participation in the Games and the specific outcomes arising from volunteering.



Key messages for future events

- Invest in the volunteer base – and make it fun.
- Use and value the local knowledge of volunteers as an asset.
- Be inclusive in recruitment and open up opportunities for volunteering afterwards.
- Create a social context where people can come together and where volunteers can contribute to building community cohesion.



Thank you for listening

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