



Olympics 2012

Volunteering Potential in the Dorset
Area

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Olympics 2012 – Volunteering Potential in the Dorset Area

Learning and Skills Council South West

A report submitted by GHK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background, Objectives and Method of the Study

The South West is in a unique position amongst the English regions outside London. Weymouth in Dorset will play host to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic sailing events, providing a local opportunity for people from Dorset to get involved in Games time activities.

Volunteering is a high profile and key aspect of the Games. While there is already a strong volunteering ethos in the South West, as in other parts of the country, there are also groups that are traditionally less likely to volunteer. Paradoxically people from these groups may well be some of those to benefit most from a volunteering experience. Included in these groups are the unemployed, people out of work resulting from a long term limiting illness and young people not in employment, education and training.

This study set out to explore the views and attitudes of people from within these groups towards the Olympics to identify what would motivate them to volunteer and how a volunteering opportunity might support people along the path back to work or into learning or training.

The study sought to address three questions:

- The first is whether and in what ways the 2012 Olympics might motivate groups traditionally less likely to get involved in volunteering to take up such activity?
- Secondly, is there potential for volunteering to be used to up skill some members of the labour market and encourage people back into work, education or training?
- Finally, and most central to this study, is the question of whether it would be possible to link these two separate themes together. In other words, could volunteering generate employment and learning outcomes and would the Olympics theme and opportunities for volunteering provide the motivator for this? What are the characteristics of a programme intervention that might generate these outcomes?

The study involved a literature review of published research on volunteering and a review of available information on the Personal Best programme currently being trialled in London across 11 boroughs. This informed interviews with 28 stakeholders based in Dorset, and focus group discussions that primarily focused on accessing views of people currently economically inactive and claiming benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Income Support (IS).

Key Findings

The potential of the Olympics theme to motivate involvement in volunteering

- The Olympic sailing events in Weymouth will generate positive benefits for the local economy, but there is uncertainty about how this will generate opportunities for local people currently trying to find work.

- There is little knowledge or experience of volunteering among potential target groups for an Olympic / volunteering themed initiative. Few had volunteered previously, and non were aware of the opportunity to register to become a Games-time volunteer.
- The chance to participate as a volunteer in Olympic related events is of interest, but most do not have any sense of what this might entail. The Games are too distant to mean anything to most people now, however sceptics remain open to being convinced that their involvement would be a good thing.
- The sailing events taking place in Weymouth were distant from most participants' experience but Cultural Olympiad events had a stronger resonance.
- People would be motivated by gaining 'some sort of advantage' as a result of their volunteering – being closer to the action.
- To be relevant, opportunities presented with an Olympic theme need take place closer to the games.

Volunteering as a route into work, training or education

- According to national research, the opportunity to learn skills, enhance employability and aid career progression are not considerations that feature strongly in individuals' decision to volunteer.
- National research also shows that people less likely to volunteer are those that are not working, have a disability or limiting, long-term illness, or have no qualifications.
- The fact that many focus group participants mentioned not having been asked as the reason for not having volunteered suggests that active recruitment within communities is needed to attract 'hard to reach' groups into volunteering.
- The potential benefits of volunteering were evident both to those who had experience of volunteering and those who did not. Many participants were however not clear on how a volunteering experience would translate into marketable experience. Negative views of volunteering included that it equated to free work and that it detracted from job search activity.
- It is clear from the literature on volunteering and through consultations with providers and practitioners that volunteering is not an approach used in initiatives seeking to move large numbers of people directly into work or education that would lead to a formal qualification.
- Volunteering is however a valuable tool that can aid the progression of those furthest from the labour market. It delivers the greatest value when volunteer placements are tailored to an individual's needs. It can deliver the confidence building or opportunity to experience the structure of a daily routine needed to get people back into a work routine.
- Volunteering works less well if it is perceived as mandatory, is seen as unpaid work, or viewed as an alternative to work, education or training.

Personal Best: linking ‘volunteering’ and ‘Olympic’ themes to a programme that promotes progression into work, education or training

- The logic behind how a back to work programme would incorporate volunteering and an Olympic theme was not immediately evident to providers, practitioners or stakeholders.
- Personal Best is a programme that has successfully achieved this by using the Olympics and volunteering as ‘themes’ to motivate and engage people in a training programme that primarily aims to progress people into work, education or training. Equipping individuals with the skills to be event volunteers is a secondary aim of the programme.
- Evidence from the Personal Best pilot run in Southwark, south London, suggests that the approach has the potential to deliver successful outcomes for the economically inactive at some distance from the labour market; in this case recipients of IB.
- Key factors that are differentiating Personal Best from other back to work programmes include: intensive support from Personal Best advisors; an emphasis on team work to generate motivational group dynamics; high profile and constant reinforcement of the Olympic and event volunteering links to generate a sense of something special; celebration of achievement; and effective referral into the programme through a strong network of partner agencies who also bring specialist knowledge of target groups’ specific needs.

What would work in Dorset

- A programme focused on delivering practical experience of core employability skills, such as team working and customer service is an attractive proposition to potential participants.
- Packaging basic tasks associated with event volunteering into marketable skills and experience that employers’ value will be essential to motivate involvement in any programme hooked on an event volunteering theme.
- Accreditation of any programme would be beneficial but was viewed as unlikely to be a key motivator for participation.
- Delivery in community setting or with ‘familiar’ organisations would motivate participation of proposed target groups. Contact in an FE college setting does however remain important and should focus in any programme in order to promote familiarity with the college environment and therefore aid the breakdown of a common barrier to progression.
- A range of Olympic and/or volunteering initiatives are currently being delivered across Dorset. Collectively they will test the level of interest in and deliverability of a range of approaches. However, most do not target economically inactive groups and those less likely to engage in volunteering. Initiatives do however demonstrate an interest and capacity among providers to deliver Olympic and volunteering related activity.
- Most volunteering activity related to the Games has yet to be planned and organised. The scale of activity and types of available roles is likely to present opportunities for economically inactive groups however there is no evidence that measures to target these groups or those least likely to volunteer have been put in place in Dorset.

- There is a diverse range and scale of event volunteering opportunities across the SW that graduates of any programme could be signposted to. However, of the small sample consulted, none actively recruited volunteers from 'hard to reach groups' or offered support to address the specific needs of individuals. Scoping with event organisers to open up routes for programme graduates would be needed. Attention would also need giving to how resources to support volunteers could be attracted.
- An Olympic / volunteering initiative as currently envisaged is likely to enhance general employability skills and in particular contribute to raised customer service skills. To enable participants to benefit from additional employment opportunities in sectors forecast to grow, and to compete with migrant labour, a key contribution of any programme will be the motivation of individuals to pursue these opportunities as well as assuring the brokerage of participants into further training that will deliver both the enhanced skills and experience that employers will increasingly be seeking to source.
- Event volunteering itself is unlikely to generate employment opportunities for graduates of any programme.

Key Recommendations

- Managing expectations against the types of volunteering opportunities that are likely to be on offer in Portland and Weymouth needs to be a key consideration of a programme. The opportunity to acquire skills and experience that is marketable to employers should instead be the key selling point of a programme.
- The opportunity to receive a guaranteed interview to be a Games time volunteer in London will be an 'attractor' to any programme, and the value of this is likely to increase closer to the Games. However, careful thought should be given as part of planning a programme to the support that would be needed for people to realise this potential benefit.
- Personal Best participants have been motivated by the sense of being part of something special generated by the buzz of being associated with the Olympics and the scale of the graduation celebration events (held at Wembley Stadium). Consideration should be given as to how a similar effect could be generated in Dorset, either through uniting activity under a single brand or enhancing coordination between Olympic themed initiatives.
- Personal Best demonstrates how a volunteering themed initiative can improve individuals' employability and aid progression into work, education or training. Key factors have differentiated the programme from others and supported its success. Where possible, these should be integrated into any Olympic themed initiatives planned in Dorset that aim to engage economically inactive groups.
- In terms of identifying a key audience for any programme, the study's findings suggest that individuals currently on IB that are interested to making a return to work but lack direction to take this forward would be worth targeting. A model providing more intensive support and a choice of progression routes that can support individuals to make the transition back into work would suit this particular group.
- Identifying effective referral pathways into the programme will be key to ensuring that individuals with the potential to benefit most from the programme are

successfully recruited. Given the nature and characteristics of the potential target groups it will be important that community based organisations play a major role.

- The timing of this study means that key lessons from initiatives in Dorset trialling approaches that link volunteering and the Olympics have yet to be identified. It will be important to capture these lessons as they emerge over the summer of 2008 in order to inform the development of any new programme. Similarly, a thorough review of the Personal Best evaluation will be needed once it has been published.
- Although the 2012 Games are a remote event for many, planning and piloting of any initiatives needs to commence early on in 2009 in order for lessons to be identified and further funding sought.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Dorset and the 2012 Olympic and Paralympics Games

The South West is in a unique position amongst the English regions outside London. Weymouth in Dorset will play host to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic¹ sailing events, providing a local opportunity for people from Dorset to get involved in Games time activities. There are early indications that the events in Weymouth have the potential to generate significant benefits for the local economy. Work is underway to ensure that this impact is more widely felt, using Dorset's involvement in the Games as a firm foundation for renewed local economic, environmental and transport improvements².

The Games also provides a unique opportunity to drive forward civic engagement. Volunteering is a high profile and key aspect of the Games. It provides not only a direct route for involvement in events, but also an opportunity to increase and broaden the volunteer base across Dorset thus generating a valuable resource for other large-scale public and civic events as well as the chance to strengthen community spirit.

There is already a strong volunteering ethos in the South West, yet, as in other parts of the country, there are also groups that are traditionally less likely to volunteer. Paradoxically people from these groups may well be some of those to benefit most from a volunteering experience. Included in these groups are the unemployed, people out of work resulting from a long term limiting illness and young people not in employment, education and training.

This study set out to explore the views and attitudes of people from within these groups towards the Olympics to identify what would motivate them to volunteer and how a volunteering opportunity might support people along the path back to work or into learning or training.

¹ For the remainder of the report the reference to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has been abbreviated to Olympic Games

² 12 for 2012 Strategy, Dorset County Council

1.2 Scope of this feasibility study and method

The objective of this study was to identify whether:

- The LSC's target groups would be motivated to undertake voluntary activities associated with the Olympic and Paralympic Games events in Weymouth and Portland
- The training, learning and experience of volunteering on offer would be a motivation to participate in a scheme with such ingredients
- The participation is likely to provide skills that could lead to work or action to study for a level 2 qualification
- There are learning and employment opportunities in the area to which participants could be directed.

The study was also required to establish whether the LSC should proceed with any programme along similar lines to the LOCOG Personal Best programme, and if so whether there should be any local dimensions and difference to such a programme.

Consequently, three questions have provided the direction and focus for this study.

The first is whether and in what ways the 2012 Olympics might motivate groups traditionally less likely to get involved in volunteering to take up such activity. Could the excitement of the Olympics provide the 'hook' to generate interest and enthusiasm for volunteering and if so, what type of volunteering opportunities would motivate people to get involved?

Secondly, is there potential for volunteering to be used to up skill some members of the labour market and encourage people back into work, education or training. Would a volunteering experience be motivation enough for people to take the next step towards getting a job or undertaking training or possibly education that would lead onto formal qualifications?

Finally, and most central to this study, is the question of whether it would be possible to link these two separate themes together. In other words, could volunteering generate employment and learning outcomes and would the Olympics theme and opportunities for volunteering provide the motivator for this? What are the characteristics of a programme intervention that might generate these outcomes?

In order to answer these questions a series of tasks was undertaken. A literature review of published research on volunteering was used to explore what motivates or prevents people from volunteering and the extent to which research and evaluation providing evidence of the linkages between volunteering and employability outcomes is available. This study is provided in Annex 2.

At the same time, a review of the Personal Best programme currently being trialled in London across 11 boroughs was carried out. This programme provides training and an events volunteering qualification for people currently out of work, and provides a potential model of intervention that could be applied in Dorset. To date, findings from the independent evaluation of the programme's pilot phase

have not been made public by the London Development Agency (LDA). Therefore to explore the programme's progress interviews were carried out with staff from the LDA managing the programme and with Pecan Training Ltd, deliverers of the Personal Best pilot in Southwark alongside Southwark College.

The findings of the literature review and review of the Personal Best Programme provided the context for discussions that took place in the fieldwork phase of the study. This entailed face to face interviews with 28 stakeholders in Dorset, falling broadly into three groups³:

- **Providers** – representatives of organisations experienced in working with potential 'target groups' through training interventions aimed at getting individuals back into employment, education or training.
- **Practitioners** – representatives of organisations within the voluntary and community and statutory sectors working with individuals that are traditionally less likely to get involved in volunteering.
- **Stakeholders** – representatives of bodies that will have a role to play in managing and delivering events for the Games in 2012 or the legacy activities relating to the Games. This group also included organisers of other large scale events that recruit volunteers.

In addition to these interviews, seven focus groups, involving a total of 38 people, were held with individuals from target groups that might potentially participate in a programme or initiative that the LSC and its partners might put in place. Six of the focus groups specifically focused on people not in work and claiming benefits such as Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Income Support (IS). Within this broad category the study specifically sought the views of people disabled by a limiting illness, people with caring responsibility such as lone parents, individuals from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), some of whom were ex-offenders. The focus groups were organised as follows:

- 2 JSA focus groups – under 25s in Bournemouth and over 35s in Weymouth (all participants were male)
- IB focus group in Weymouth (mix of male and female)

³ A full list of study participants is provided in Annex 1.

- Lone parents with young children in Weymouth (predominantly female)
- BME women out of work in Bournemouth
- Young ex-offenders in Dorchester (male)

In addition, a group discussion with trade union learning representatives took place in Bournemouth to discuss how employed people, particularly those in lower-skilled work or without a full level 2 qualification, might become involved in programmes promoting the acquisition of skills through volunteering.

Timing of the study: The main methodological issue faced by this study was one of timescale, presenting several challenges described below.

- There are a range of initiatives currently being piloted in Dorset that link volunteering and the Olympic theme. These present the opportunity to generate valuable insights into the feasibility and potential to generate employability outcomes from a range of approaches. They are however in the early stages of development or delivery and it will be late summer before evidence of their outcomes is generated.
- Similarly, the study has been unable to fully review the Personal Best model, currently being piloted in London as an independent evaluation of the programme has yet to be made public. Information on the actual cost of delivery per participant and the outcomes generated for different participant groups would have proved valuable information, but was not available during the timeframe of this study.
- With the Games still over four years away little information is available on volunteering and employment opportunities that the Games activities in Portland and Weymouth will actually generate. Consequently it has not been possible to provide a detailed assessment of the potential scale of an initiative.

1.3 Structure of the Report

- Section 2 – explores the potential of the Olympics theme to generate enthusiasm and interest in volunteering, looking at both the view of participants in the focus groups and providers and practitioners.
- Section 3 – discusses the links between volunteering and progression into work, education and training drawing on the experience of focus group participants and providers' experience of delivering training interventions to 'hard to reach groups'. This section explores when and with whom volunteering works as a progression route and some of the issues around 'packaging' volunteering within a back to work programme.
- Section 4 – sets out the perceived challenges faced in integrating volunteering and the Olympics theme within a programme that aims to progress people into work or formal education, then goes onto review the Personal Best programme which clearly demonstrates an approach through which this could be achieved.
- Section 5 – sets out the scope for delivering an Olympic and volunteering themed intervention in Dorset. It explores views on the content and structure of a potential programme, the likely interest from providers and

practitioners, and the range of event volunteering into which such a programme might link.

- Section 6 – sets out the key considerations that need to be taken into account before moving forward with any initiative.

2 THE POTENTIAL OF THE OLYMPICS THEME TO MOTIVATE INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTEERING

Key Messages

- The Olympic sailing events in Weymouth will generate positive benefits for the local economy, but there is uncertainty about how this will generate opportunities for local people currently trying to find work.
- There is little knowledge or experience of volunteering among potential target groups for an Olympic / volunteering themed initiative. Few had volunteered previously, and non were aware of the opportunity to register to become a Games-time volunteer.
- The chance to participate as a volunteer in Olympic related events is of interest, but most do not have any sense of what this might entail. The Games are too distant to mean anything to most people now, however sceptics remain open to being convinced that their involvement would be a good thing.
- The sailing events taking place in Weymouth were distant from most participants' experience but Cultural Olympiad events had a stronger resonance.
- People would be motivated by gaining 'some sort of advantage' as a result of their volunteering – being closer to the action.
- To be relevant, opportunities presented with an Olympic theme need take place closer to the games.

A recent study exploring perceptions of the Olympic Games⁴ found generally positive views among people living in Weymouth and Portland in terms of the benefits resulting from hosting the sailing events. 79% of the 400 residents questioned thought that the 2012 Games would be positive for the local economy, while 80% felt trade for local businesses would increase. Over 70% thought that employment opportunities would increase.

⁴ Richard Shipway (2008) *Host Communities Perceptions*. The Centre for Event and Sport Research at Bournemouth University.

Focus groups carried out for this study generally reflected these findings with some nuances that reflect the circumstances and current outlook on life of those spoken to.

The most common observation made was that the Olympics is an event in the distant future. Many had not thought that far ahead in terms of their own lives. When asked, most hoped to be in work. Parents of young children reflected that four years from now, children would be at school, thus opening up new opportunities for them. Most thought the Olympics would be something of interest and excitement in the future, possibly in the 12 to 18 months running up to the Games, but not now.

Most agreed that the Olympics had the potential to bring economic benefits to Dorset. A few were aware of efforts going on with the tourism and leisure sector to upgrade the visitor offer by way of improved accommodation and higher quality restaurants for example. However, there was general scepticism as to whether economic benefits would trickle down to them.

'There's a lot of building going on now in Weymouth, but they are not using local people, they're bringing contractors in to do the work' (JSA 35+ group)

'It's only service industry jobs that will be created. Nothing worthwhile, it will be mainly immigrant labour. Jobs will go to people prepared to work for £5.00 an hour' (IB group)

General enthusiasm about the Games seemed to be tempered somewhat by concern about potential negative impacts resulting from large visitor numbers that will be attracted to Weymouth and Portland. Transport in and around Weymouth was of particular concern. Failure to address infrastructure issues was widely considered as a factor that would limit the success of the events in Weymouth.

There was a very mixed response about getting involved in the Games. No one consulted during the focus groups had given thought to volunteering for the Olympics, or was aware that there are opportunities to register interest to volunteer. In most focus groups, few had any previous experience of volunteering.

In terms of getting involved in Weymouth based events, most focus group participants were cautious, but open to the idea of volunteering. Few had a sense of what might actually be entailed in volunteering although there was a genuine enthusiasm for 'being part of the event', particularly among younger people.

'It's got to be active... you want to be part of the competition, part of the event... massively involved not just sidelined, parking cars' (JSA under 25 group)

There was not a great deal of enthusiasm for getting directly involved in the sailing events. For many, sailing was a sport they had neither experience of nor interest in. There was a general perception across the focus groups that sailing is elitist and for the wealthy. A small number of younger people were attracted to the idea of getting involved in volunteering activity on the water; in safety boats that would be required for the events for example.

There was far more interest amongst the BME focus group participants in participating in events related to the Cultural Olympiad. All the participants of this

group had previous experience of volunteering, mainly in cultural activities for their own communities and also involvement in local schools that their children attended. Participants were interested in taking part in activities that would celebrate and showcase their own cultural traditions of food or dance for example. Young people similarly showed interest in the Cultural Olympiad, although their interest was in the potential for large scale music or youth culture events being brought to the local area.

Negative views towards the recruitment of volunteers at the Olympics were initially expressed in several focus groups (IB group and JSA 35+ group). Participants questioned why badly paid or unemployed people were being asked to volunteer for free when what people really needed was a fairly paid job.

'It's just a way of them saving money' (IB group)

However, participants were open to being convinced otherwise. Even individuals with relatively entrenched views expressed interest at the end of the sessions in being kept abreast of any opportunities that arise.

There was lower awareness that Olympic events were taking place in Dorset at focus groups conducted in Bournemouth. However once people were made aware of the Weymouth based events, participants appeared equally as interested in taking place in Olympics themed volunteering activity.

The views of providers and practitioners were broadly consistent with focus group participants. There was a general consensus that enthusiasm for the Games is likely to be 'whipped up' closer to the time, for example through increased media coverage, and that this will generate a ground swell of interest in direct involvement. However, to engage those groups considered the 'hardest to reach' there must be tangible opportunities that people can relate to. An Olympics theme cannot deliver this alone. A number of providers are currently testing the level of interest generated by the Olympics theme thorough branding existing volunteering initiatives or back to work training programmes⁵. This work is in most instances in the early stages, although one provider reported playing down the links, as these

⁵ Details of these are set out in section 5.2.

are not fully understood by clients; Olympics employment opportunities are not evident to these client groups so far.

3 VOLUNTEERING AS A ROUTE INTO WORK, TRAINING OR EDUCATION

Key Messages

- According to national research, the opportunities to learn skills, enhance employability and aid career progression are not considerations that feature strongly in individuals' decision to volunteer.
- National research also shows that people less likely to volunteer are those that are not working, have a disability or limiting, long-term illness, or have no qualifications.
- The fact that many focus group participants mentioned not having been asked as the reason for not having volunteered suggests that active recruitment within communities is needed to attract 'hard to reach' groups into volunteering.
- The potential benefits of volunteering were evident both to those who had experience of volunteering and those who did not. Many participants were however not clear on how a volunteering experience would translate into marketable experience. Negative views of volunteering included that it equated to free work and that it detracted from job search activity.
- It is clear from the literature on volunteering and through consultations with providers and practitioners that volunteering is not an approach used in initiatives seeking to move large numbers of people directly into work or education that would lead to a formal qualification.
- Volunteering is however a valuable tool that can aid the progression of those furthest from the labour market. It delivers the greatest value when volunteer placements are tailored to an individual's needs. It can deliver the confidence building or opportunity to experience the structure of a daily routine needed to get people back into a work routine.
- Volunteering works less well if it is perceived as mandatory, is seen as unpaid work, or viewed as an alternative to work, education or training.

3.1 What motivates people to volunteer?

The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving provides useful insight into individuals' motivation to volunteer. By far the most common reason cited by individuals who volunteer is the desire to improve things or help people (53% of respondents). This is followed by interest in a specific cause and time to spare (41% respectively), and the desire to meet people and make friends (30% of respondents). The opportunity to learn skills, enhance employability and aid career progression does not appear to be strongly associated with volunteering. An interest in learning new skills was given as a reason for volunteering by only 19% of respondents, career progression was mentioned by 7%, and opportunity to gain a recognised qualification highlighted by a mere 2% of respondents. Those most likely to identify the links between volunteering and skills and employability were those aged between 16 and 24.

The study also provides information on the characteristics or individual circumstances of those who take part in volunteering. Overall, the proportion of people involved in regular volunteering with an organisation (formal volunteering) was lowest among those not working. People with a disability or limiting, long-term illness were least likely to volunteer (with only 17% volunteering regularly). Of those unemployed or looking for work 35% volunteered regularly. People with no qualifications were also less likely to volunteer regularly (31%).

Discussions with focus group participants generally confirmed these findings.

The majority of focus group participants had not taken part in voluntary work before. Most commonly, individuals had not considered volunteering because no one had approached them about taking part. For many parents, the time commitments of raising young children had prevented them giving it serious thought. Many younger people equated volunteering with overseas work on aid projects and expressed interest in doing this type of work.

There was a clear sense of the purpose of volunteering from across the groups. Most identified it as an opportunity to *'do something for others'* or to *'support a charity you believe in'*. Young people currently on youth referral orders identified that the opportunity to build up trust would be a key benefit.

Those who had taken part in volunteering were able to identify tangible benefits of their involvement for themselves, and the organisations they supported.

'I like the social life, we have a real laugh. Plus I'm able to help them out with their IT'
(Skate Park Volunteer, IB group)

'I volunteered at a furniture shop when I was unemployed last time. I got to meet people you don't normally meet and it provided me with references that helped me get my next job' (JSA 35+ group)

'The events and activities we run help bring the community together and helps maintain a sense of identity' (organiser of a cultural community organisation, BME group)

Volunteering was treated with scepticism by some focus group participants together with concerns over how such activity was viewed by Jobcentre Plus.

'It's not very attractive working for no money. I could just do a job and get paid for it'
(JSA under 25 group)

'If you do more than a certain number of hours the Jobcentre staff don't like it, they think it takes you away from getting a job' (JSA under 25 group)

Focus group participants were generally very positive about the benefits that volunteering could bring in terms of acquiring new skills or experience that would help get a job, or in identifying a potential career interest that could be followed up with training. However, none appeared to have had actual experience of this. Even among individuals that participated in the BME focus group, few had given thought to how their voluntary experience could be turned into marketable experience for employers, or whether accreditation of these skills through a qualification for example would help firm up a career path. A number of participants in this group had built up significant experience in project and event management through their voluntary work.

3.2 Volunteering as a route into work, education and training

The literature review for this study found very little evidence of research and evaluation of the links between volunteering and employability, and what does exist does not compare volunteering against other interventions to promote employability. In part, this may be explained by the lack of emphasis that volunteers themselves place on qualifications and employability as a reason for

and benefit of their involvement in volunteering. The 2007 National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving directly asked about this subject and found that less than one-quarter of volunteers reported that it was important that their volunteering gave them a chance to improve their employment prospects, while just over one-tenth said that the chance to gain qualifications was important. Young people aged 16 – 24 were the group most likely to value volunteering for these reasons, as were people from Asian and Black minority ethnic groups.

It is clear from the literature and through consultations with providers and practitioners that volunteering is not an approach used in initiatives seeking to move large numbers of people directly into work or education that would lead to a formal qualification. Far more common is the use of work placements that are time bound, provide a job 'taster', give individuals experience of a structured work environment and experience to add to their CVs. The distinction between work placements and volunteering was unclear for some providers and practitioners, who saw volunteering predominantly as a work placement within the third sector.

From other providers however, a definition of volunteering emerged that did provide a degree of differentiation from a work placement. Volunteering was described as a valuable tool which alongside a suite of other interventions can support people to move closer to the labour market. These providers and practitioners identified a clear set of factors that indicated how volunteering could generate successful progression onto work, education or further training as well as identifying the conditions in which volunteering can generate less successful outcomes.

- **Volunteering provides a route for individuals that are not work ready.** Providers and practitioners described that volunteering is most commonly used for individuals in need of confidence building or the opportunity to experience structure in their daily lives in order to get them back into a work routine.
- **It can provide a safe environment in which issues preventing progression can be exposed and addressed.** For people already in work and particularly those in low-skilled jobs, TUC Learning Reps explained that volunteering often generated a way of exposing issues or needs (such as literacy or numeracy) that can remain hidden in the workplace. It can also provide confidence that change or up-skilling is a possibility.
- It was very clear from consultation with providers and practitioners **that the greatest value is achieved from volunteering when placements are individually brokered to suit the needs and aspirations of individuals.** It's essential that individuals play a part in selecting their placement and attend on a basis that suits their specific needs.
- **Volunteering works well when a primary objective is personal development of the individual.** For the long-term unemployed, carers or ex-offenders for example, volunteering provides a vehicle for rediscovering lost skills, assisting people to find direction and encouraging the development of motivation to seek out a path that can lead onto further training or work.
- **Volunteering works less well** if it is perceived as mandatory, seen as unpaid work, or viewed as an alternative to work, education or training.

Packaging volunteering as part of a back to work programme

Bridge to Work is a three year programme jointly funded by Bournemouth and Poole councils through a multi area agreement. Its objective is to assist the long-term unemployed or people with very little previous experience of work into the labour market. As such the programme works with people from the hardest to reach groups including young lone parents, carers with no experience of work, and people with a low level of basic skills. A 12 hour training programme delivered over 6 weeks provides an introduction to job search skills and the principles of work following which the programme organises a volunteer placement to help participants to develop their confidence, skills and experience of work. Each placement is individually brokered and tailored to the participant's capabilities and needs. The programme works closely with a small number of local employers to develop opportunities and has been well received. The programme is still in its infancy but has already achieved success in providing voluntary placement experiences that have built participants' confidence and their ability to put skills into practice. A number of participants have gone onto apply for jobs as a result of their experience.

4 PERSONAL BEST: LINKING ‘VOLUNTEERING’ AND ‘OLYMPIC’ THEMES TO A PROGRAMME THAT PROMOTES PROGRESSION INTO WORK, EDUCATION OR TRAINING

Key Messages

- The logic behind how a back to work programme would incorporate volunteering and an Olympic theme was not immediately evident to providers, practitioners or stakeholders.
- Personal Best is a programme that has successfully achieved this by using the Olympics and volunteering as ‘themes’ to motivate and engage people in a training programme that primarily aims to progress people into work, education or training. Equipping individuals with the skills to be event volunteers is a secondary aim of the programme.
- Evidence from the Personal Best pilot run in Southwark, south London, suggests that the approach has the potential to deliver successful outcomes for the economically inactive at some distance from the labour market; in this case recipients of IB.
- Key factors that are differentiating Personal Best from other back to work programmes include: intensive support from Personal Best advisors; an emphasis on team work to generate motivational group dynamics; high profile and constant reinforcement of the Olympic and event volunteering links to generate a sense of something special; celebration of achievement; and effective referral into the programme through a strong network of partner agencies who also bring specialist knowledge of target groups’ specific needs.

4.1 Linking volunteering, the Olympics and employability: the challenge

The central question for this study was to explore whether the linking of volunteering and the Olympics theme through a programme, could generate employability outcomes within the Dorset area. It is probably fair to say that this presented a perplexing question for most training providers and practitioners consulted as part of this study for the following reasons.

- Although there is a degree of interest in the Olympics, perceptions of the value of opportunities that this will generate are at best mixed. At this stage there is little hard evidence of what will be on offer to enthuse and engage people and encourage them to volunteer for the Weymouth events.
- The main motivation for volunteering is civic engagement and the opportunity to give something back. Involvement in volunteering is not widely seen as an activity that primarily generates employability skills.
- In terms of generating a progression route into work, education or training, volunteering is considered to work best in circumstances that provide flexibility and allow individuals to progress at their own pace. This may take weeks or months. Many providers and practitioners questioned how volunteering could be effectively integrated into a structured programme focused on outputs and outcomes. They suggested that the pressure to achieve measurable targets in the short term had the potential to detract from valuable contribution that volunteering has to make to an individual’s progression over time.

4.2 Overview of the Personal Best Model

Personal Best is a programme that uses both the Olympics and volunteering as 'themes' to motivate and engage people in a training programme that aims to provide opportunities for progression. The Personal Best model draws heavily on the experience and lessons learnt from the Pre-Volunteer Programme established for the Manchester Commonwealth Games described in the box below.

Pre-Volunteer Programme (PVP) for Manchester's Commonwealth Games

The PVP was one of 10 legacy programmes developed to generate a lasting impact of Manchester's hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth Games. The programme aimed to provide a route into volunteering for individuals from groups traditionally less likely to volunteer. It gave people the opportunity to undergo a training course providing them with a level 1 qualification in event volunteering and a guaranteed interview with volunteer organisers for the Games. The programme was delivered at a cost of £3 million, with around one-third of funding provided by the Single Regeneration Budget and the remainder generated from other un-specified public sources. The programme generated private sector contributions of just under £20,000.

The evaluation of the Commonwealth Games Legacy programme⁶, reported the recruitment of a diverse range of participants to the Pre-Volunteer Programme. 20% of participants came from BME communities and 5% were people with disabilities. Large numbers of young people took part (both from NEET groups and those already enrolled in FE on leisure and hospitality courses, for example) and the programme also attracted various groups of benefit claimants (lone parents, long term unemployed). The evaluation strongly points to the **prestige of the Games and the prospect of involvement in them as a key factor attracting participation in the programme.**

The evaluation of Manchester's PVP presents other lessons, amongst them the value of celebrating success through a formal 'graduation ceremony' on completion of the events volunteering training course. The role of volunteer advisors appears to have been a key factor in maintaining participants' awareness of up coming events at which they could use their new found skills and enabling programme graduates to apply and successfully act as volunteers at the Commonwealth Games themselves.

The PVP also provides examples of positive outcomes, particularly in terms of qualifications. Over

⁶ Ecotec (no date given), *'An Evaluation of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Programme'*.

2,000 participants on the programme successfully gained one of the two level 1 event volunteering qualifications designed specifically for the programme. The programme's evaluation points to 160 job entries that were achieved following volunteers' participation in the programme.

Like Manchester's PVP, Personal Best provides participants with the opportunity to gain a qualification in event volunteering and an opportunity to take part in the Games by guaranteeing all those completing the course an interview with the Games events organisers, in this case, LOCOG (London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games). For Personal Best, the training component of the course has been enhanced. The event qualification will comprise 120 hours of guided learning delivered over an eight to sixteen week period which leads to a full NVQ Level 1 qualification (to be accredited by OCN) covering nine learning units: volunteering in the Olympics, becoming a volunteer, equality and diversity, customer relations, emergencies and fire awareness, public safety, conflict resolution, team and interpersonal skills, a volunteer placement, and preparing and reflecting on being a volunteer. How Personal Best differs from the PVP is that its primary emphasis is on getting people into work, or moving them closer to the labour market by engaging them in further education, training or volunteering. Its secondary aim is to generate a volunteer base in London of individuals that have the skills to work as volunteers at large scale sporting and civic events, including the Olympics in 2012.

The programme is currently in its second phase of piloting across 11 London boroughs. Although local authorities are contract holders in the main, strong emphasis has been placed on involving voluntary and community sector providers and taking delivery into community settings. Hackney, one of the five host boroughs has for example delivered Personal Best in collaboration with a group of locally based voluntary and community organisations including Age Concern and the Learning Trust. Although the course syllabus is fairly fixed, modifications are used to tailor materials to the specific needs of the different target groups. Phase three of the programme will commence in May 2008. The programme will be rolled out across all 33 London boroughs. During this phase, which will run until June 2011 it is anticipated that 20,000 people will go through the programme. The target groups for the programme are the unemployed, economically inactive and people without a full level 2 qualification, although exceptions to this are made for some incapacity benefit recipients. The programme has a budget of £20 million and is being funded by the ESF Co-financing programme jointly resourced through the LSC and London Development Agency. The programme has been successful in receiving endorsement from LOCOG to use Olympic branding. Consequently, strong emphasis has been placed on ensuring that Personal Best delivers a high quality and standardised programme across London. In effect it is a franchise model.

4.3 Personal Best in Southwark

A pilot programme of Personal Best has been delivered in Southwark, South London jointly by Pecan Training, a private provider with significant experience of delivering employability programmes to 'hard to reach' groups, and Southwark College. The pilot specifically targeted a cohort of participants on IB many of whom have complex health related issues and a high level of support need. The 120 hours guided learning required for the programme is being delivered over eight weeks (the requirement in the pilot's first phase was 60 hours delivered over

four weeks). The volunteer placement takes place over two weeks with participants working in groups to complete community projects.

Findings from the first piloting phase suggest that the programme is capable of generating very positive outcomes. Retention rates on the programme were above 80% which is extremely encouraging given the nature of the cohort involved in the programme. Similarly positive findings were reported on progression; ten out of 60 participants on the programme went on to find jobs with the majority of the remaining participants moving onto further training at FE college, having now become familiar with the college learning environment (this was reported as a key barrier that had prevented prior engagement with FE).

Personal Best is a well resourced programme but this alone does not account for the programme's emerging success. The structure of the model also appears to be working well. It has been successful in differentiating itself from other 'products' in the market place and provides valuable lessons for back to work programmes. It also demonstrates how programmes that want to capitalise on the Olympics theme and the concept of volunteering can motivate people out of work to become active in the labour market or acquire employability skills.

Personal Best in Southwark: what differentiates this programme from others?

- The intensive support of Personal Best Advisors – from recruitment, assessment of skills and experience, through to supporting people into employment, training or further volunteering on completion of the programme. Advisors have time to play a 'hand holding' role.
- Themed delivery of employability skills and the use of practical 'real world' contexts enthuses participants and makes learning relevant. such as the use of St. John's Ambulance staff to deliver first aid and public safety components of the course.
- Emphasis on team work generates motivational group dynamics – team lunches, group trips and group work creates trust and collegiality amongst participants and motivates individuals to stay committed to the course.
- The volunteering component of the course is packaged into group work on a community project. This generates team spirit and a sense of group achievement.
- High profile and constant reinforcement of the Olympics and event volunteering links generates a sense of something special. LDA team remain proactive in providing regular updates of local event volunteering opportunities that participants can get involved in.
- Celebration of achievement – graduation ceremony at Wembley Arena delivers the 'wow' factor giving recognition to the achievement of gaining qualification and reinforcing the point that individuals have been part of something special.
- Effective referral into the programme through a strong network of partner agencies who also bring specialist knowledge of target groups' specific needs.

In many ways the Personal Best Programme addresses many of the challenges reported in engaging hard to reach groups.

5 WHAT WOULD WORK IN DORSET

Key Messages

- A programme focused on delivering practical experience of core employability skills, such as team working and customer service is an attractive proposition to potential participants.
- Packaging basic tasks associated with event volunteering into marketable skills and experience that employers' value will be essential to motivate involvement in any programme hooked on an event volunteering theme.
- Accreditation of any programme would be beneficial but was viewed as unlikely to be a key motivator for participation.
- Delivery in community setting or with 'familiar' organisations would motivate participation of proposed target groups. Contact in an FE college setting does however remain important and should focus in any programme in order to promote familiarity with the college environment and therefore aid the breakdown of a common barrier to progression.
- A range of Olympic and/or volunteering initiatives are currently being delivered across Dorset. Collectively they will test the level of interest in and deliverability of a range of approaches. However, most do not target economically inactive groups and those less likely to engage in volunteering. Initiatives do however demonstrate an interest and capacity among providers to deliver Olympic and volunteering related activity.
- Most volunteering activity related to the Games has yet to be planned and organised. The scale of activity and types of available roles is likely to present opportunities for economically inactive groups however there is no evidence that measures to target these groups or those least likely to volunteer have been put in place in Dorset.
- There is a diverse range and scale of event volunteering opportunities across the SW that graduates of any programme could be signposted to. However, of the small sample consulted, none actively recruited volunteers from 'hard to reach groups' or offered support to address the specific needs of individuals. Scoping with event organisers to open up routes for programme graduates would be needed. Attention would also need giving to how resources to support volunteers could be attracted.
- An Olympic / volunteering initiative as currently envisaged is likely to enhance general employability skills and in particular contribute to raised customer service skills. To enable participants to benefit from additional employment opportunities in sectors forecast to grow, and to compete with migrant labour, a key contribution of any programme will be the motivation of individuals to pursue these opportunities as well as assuring the brokerage of participants into further training that will deliver both the enhanced skills and experience that employers will increasingly be seeking to source.
- Event volunteering itself is unlikely to generate employment opportunities for graduates of any programme.

5.1 Programme structure and content

As a starting point for discussion, a brief overview of the Personal Best model was given to focus group participants, providers and practitioners, to gauge the potential level of interest in this type of approach and to stimulate views on what might work, or should be delivered differently in the context of Dorset.

Among focus group participants, providers and practitioners there was a general consensus that a programme structured around a generic syllabus of core employability skills would be a valuable and attractive proposition. Many focus group participants were quick to pick up on the opportunities that this could provide.

'You see it on all the job adverts these days.... "ability to work in a team"... it would be really good to have something that showed you could do this' (Lone Parent group discussion)

Other skills that focus group participants felt that it would be useful to be able to demonstrate knowledge and experience of were:

- delivering good quality customer service
- conflict resolution / managing difficult situations with colleagues and customers
- health and safety / public safety
- organisational and leadership skills

Focus group participants were keen to stress that the ability to demonstrate practical experience of using these skills in a context that employers would understand and value is what is important. Many were unclear as to how events volunteering could deliver such opportunities for them and were therefore more sceptical about the value of programme units specifically tailored to how to be a volunteer.

A number of providers and practitioners however were readily able to identify these links and emphasised the importance of 'packaging' what can otherwise be seen as basic tasks into 'marketable experience and skills'. For example volunteering opportunities, such as crowd control, parking and hosting / information points that often feature in large scale events can provide tangible experience of:

- team working and problem solving;
- how to stay calm in difficult situations and dealing with difficult people;
- time management;
- ability to complete end-to-end tasks;
- communication skills – demonstrating people's ability to interpret visual information e.g. map reading skills, ability to give clear directions;
- demonstrate a willingness and ability to improve own performance and learning – and the flexibility and willingness to take part in training.

By and large accreditation of any such programme was considered of merit. Trade Union Learning Representatives pointed out that although many in low-skilled employment were qualified in their job because of their knowledge and experience, they have nothing to demonstrate their competence in generic skills. For people facing redundancy, this can generate real concerns. For most others the idea of having '*something to show*' at the end of the programme was considered valuable. Some practitioners however were wary, suggesting that a qualification had the potential to turn some groups off or generate additional

pressure that participants might struggle with, particularly if participating in the programme was already proving a stretching experience (e.g. for people with learning difficulties). The overall consensus appeared to be that while a qualification would be a useful outcome of such a programme it would not be a factor that would motivate engagement in the first place in most instances.

Other feedback on content and structure offered by focus group participants, providers and practitioners included:

- The prospect of a programme of 120 guided learning hours delivered over an eight week period was not a daunting prospect to focus group participants in receipt of benefits.
- Most focus group participants considered the opportunity for team work and a chance to deliver community projects as very attractive. Providers and practitioners thought this would provide a very positive introduction to volunteering. Positive initial experiences are essential for motivating and maintaining interest in volunteering.
- Focus group participants and practitioners agreed that provision delivered in community setting or with 'familiar' organisations would motivate participation in the programme. Contact in an FE college setting does however remain important and should focus in any programme in order to promote familiarity with the college learning environment and therefore aid the breakdown of a common barrier to progression.
- For parents that took part in focus groups, childcare would be the 'make or break issue' of such a programme. Good quality and fully funded provision would need to be assured. Similarly for people living in rural areas, transport solutions and expenses for this would be needed.

5.2 Experience and interest of providers

There is certainly a degree of interest in delivering in any forthcoming initiatives that might link the themes of volunteering and the Olympics and provide progression vehicles for those in need of support to become economically active.

The table below maps out some of the current activity within the area that promotes volunteering, delivers Olympics theme initiatives, or ties one or more of these themes together with the development of employability skills. Most of these programmes are fairly new and also short term initiatives. Collectively they have the potential to provide a measure of what approaches are deliverable and gauge the actual level of interest that volunteering and Olympic themed activities are generating. They will also provide an indication of providers' capacity to deliver such initiatives. It will however, be important to capture these lessons in the summer while knowledge and experience of what has worked is still fresh.

Programme	Description
Train of Events, South West Forum	A pilot programme providing training for individuals in events volunteering linked into large scale events taking place in summer 2008. It is anticipated that 150 people will take part in the pilot, which will be delivered in locations across the South West (Dorset; Bath / Bristol; and Plymouth). Participants will take part in six days of training and workshops on the skills required of event volunteers over a six week period. Local volunteer bureaux will be involved in the identification and recruitment of participants. The aim is for 50% of participants to come from 'hard to reach groups'.
Welcoming Our World, New Forest and Dorset Tourism Partnership and Weymouth College	A series of five one day accredited training courses aimed at attracting anyone living in Dorset that wants to develop the skills needed to be a volunteer leader. Courses on offer are: an introduction to trainer skills; health and safety; emergency first aid and 'welcoming all' courses which focus on customer service and communication skills needed to greet international visitors and customer service skills needed to deal with people with disabilities. The courses take place between April and June 2008 and are being marketed through local volunteer bureaux.
Volunteering initiatives Weymouth and Portland Council	Weymouth Council run a number of large scale public events throughout the year and are developing links into current initiatives training event volunteers with the aim of brokering volunteer involvement in these events. The intention is to create a database of opportunities searchable by interested individuals.
Cultural Olympiad activities, Dorset County Council	The council is planning a series of events to celebrate the Cultural Olympiad, starting with an arts installation event entitled 'Inside out'. Individuals interested in volunteering at arts events will receive training as part of the programme of activity planned.
Increasing volunteering, Dorset County Council and Dorchester Volunteer Bureau	This initiative delivered by Dorchester Volunteer Bureau aims to increase the number of people volunteering in Dorset by 4,000 over a two year period. The volunteer bureau's outreach worker's role is to recruit volunteers from out in the community. The bureau itself matches individuals to available placements.
Language and culture projects, Dorset Adult Learning and Paragon Training	This LSC funded project builds on previous work and will explore culture and language and will adopt a 2012 theme. Dorset Adult Learning will work primarily with teaching assistants to develop cultural awareness. Paragon training as part of this scheme will work with an E2E cohort (looking at strengthening cultural awareness and language skills of this group).
Volunteering qualification (level 2), Dorset Adult Learning	Dorset Adult Learning has plans to develop a volunteering qualification at level 2. The intention is to pilot the course in summer 2008. The course will target existing volunteers offering them information, advice and guidance to identify a progression pathway in training, education or work. The course will be delivered in three locations across the County and comprise a mix of level 1 and level 2, life skills courses (confidence building, anger management) and vocational courses (e.g. certificate in playwork, teaching assistant, customer service skills etc). The course will be delivered through mainstream funding.

Jobshop 2012, Bournemouth and Poole College (partners, Abilities and Bournemouth Churches Housing Association)	This ESF programme funded until June 2008 offers benefit claimants, a short training programme focusing on jobsearch skills, followed by a work placement or short course that can lead to employer recognised qualifications such as the CSCS card (Construction Skills Certification Scheme). Basic skills materials have been designed with a 2012 theme.
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5.3 Potential within the South West to provide event volunteering opportunities

Opportunities for volunteering linked to the 2012 Olympic sailing events in Dorset

The scale of Games sailing events in 2012 is on a par with current events taking place at the Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy (WPNSA) in the summer months. Test events taking place in 2010 and 2011 will be bigger as twice as many competitors will take part. WPNSA currently manage volunteer involvement in events through a database. Around 150 people are registered which allows the WPNSA to deliver eight weeks of week-long competitions over the summer months. Existing volunteers are recruited through recruitment drives in the local paper, on local radio and on the WPNSA's website. Volunteers are from across all age groups but are mainly professionals, the active retired, or young people between school and university education. Volunteering does not currently attract disabled, disadvantaged or workless people from the Weymouth and Portland area. LOCOG will be responsible for managing the sailing events in Weymouth and identifying and recruiting volunteers to support these. An event coordinator has yet to be appointed to oversee this activity. It is expected that there will be a high demand from people involved in the sailing community across the UK to volunteer at the Olympic tests and actual competition events in 2012. However this shouldn't preclude local people from taking up volunteering opportunities. The table below provides a summary of anticipated volunteer requirements on the WPNSA site⁷.

Volunteering at WPNSA	Roles to include	Test Events in 2010 and 2011	Games Events in 2012
On water and shore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crews and drivers of safety rib boats 	150 – 200 volunteers per	100-150 volunteers per

⁷ This information was provided by WPNSA's volunteer coordinator.

competition volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Committee boat ▪ Beach master and Event Director ▪ Flag signalling ▪ Administration of registration and results 	day over six days of competitive events.	day over six days of competitive events.
On shore Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Car parking – park and ride ▪ Site management ▪ Hosting on WPNSA site (for competitors and support teams) ▪ People management on WPNSA site 	100-150 volunteers per day over nine days.	50-100 volunteers per day over nine days.

Other Olympic related volunteering activity

The Games time competitions and the test events in 2010 and 2011 have the potential to generate large visitor numbers to Weymouth and Portland and the surrounding area. LOCOG estimate that the Games will attract up to 30,000 visitors a day. This will generate a need for 'hosts' knowledgeable about the local area and facilities, individuals to manage park and ride schemes as well as volunteers to manage the flow of people around the town and at key locations, such as the audience venues for watching the sailing events displayed on big screens. LOCOG will have overall responsibility for managing volunteer involvement but will work closely in coordinating this with WPNSA, Weymouth and Portland Council and Dorset County Council. This work is in the early stages and as yet there are no estimates of the potential number of volunteers needed or a detailed list of tasks for which volunteers will be required.

Other event volunteering opportunities in the South West

In addition to the opportunities presented by the Olympics, there are a range of other events which regularly take place in Dorset and elsewhere in the South West region which require volunteer participation in event organisation and management. The largest events that require event volunteers are music festivals, the biggest of which is the Glastonbury festival in Somerset for which several thousand event volunteers are required for a ten day period in June. Oxfam is the main volunteer recruiter for Glastonbury providing 1,300 volunteers. Other volunteering opportunities are available at events such as the Dorset Steam Fair, cycling events and marathons although these tend to be on a smaller scale. Volunteers at music, sporting or other events may fulfil a number of roles including marshals, stewards, ticket checkers, campsite patrols and directing traffic.

Recruitment and selection of volunteers

Procedures in place for selecting volunteers are minimal. In most instances, while priority is given to those who have previously volunteered, other volunteers are accepted on a first come, first served basis. Only one of the volunteer recruiters, Oxfam, requested a reference from volunteer applicants.

Recruitment is undertaken primarily through websites with volunteer recruiters linked from the main event websites. Application is mostly through an on-line form. Recruitment is largely untargeted although in a few instances, referral

organisations were used with varying degrees of success. Oxfam works with some universities who run event management courses (such as Leeds Metropolitan) by sending the volunteer advertisement directly to them. For the UK School Games taking place in Bath and Bristol, volunteers are being recruited through further and higher education institutions and sports organisations which the organisers will rely on to undertake an initial screening of applicants. One recruiter mentioned that in the past they had received volunteer referrals from Jobcentre Plus through New Deal programmes but that this was unsatisfactory because these volunteers did not have the same motivation – *‘it works better when they come to us’*.

None of the organisations spoken to was involved in any kind of outreach activity to support non-traditional groups to volunteer. Recruitment procedures were generally quite passive with organisers adopting a ‘take what we get’ attitude. It should be noted that in many instances, the recruitment of volunteers is also done in a voluntary capacity and/or by charitable organisations who are unlikely to have much resource to devote to proactive recruitment and which would not be in a position to provide additional support that may be required by hard to reach groups.

Training provided

For most of the events, the training provided is short, unaccredited and delivered on site. Some events only require that 50% of volunteers are trained. In many instances this can largely be satisfied by return volunteers. Consequently many volunteers receive no training. When training does occur, it usually takes place the day or evening before the event begins.

The most extensive training being planned was for volunteers for the UK School Games. Although this is still in development, the organisers anticipate that it will take place over a weekend, one month before the event as well as a further one day orientation session shortly before the Games. Although the training programme has yet to be finalised, it will award volunteers with a National Certificate of Further Education in Event Volunteering at level 2 and will include modules on customer service, communications and event management skills.

Oxfam’s first time volunteers receive a three hour training session prior to the event which may take place in any number of venues across the country. This is a generic training session that is applicable to any of the festivals they provide volunteers for and is valid for four years. It clarifies volunteers’ expectations of the event, prepares them for what they need to bring, outlines roles and responsibilities and provides basic training on emergencies and conflict management. This is similar to training provided by other festival volunteer recruiters.

Interest in recruiting volunteers with an event volunteering qualification

Event organisers thought that having undertaken an event volunteering course would be a valuable asset for the volunteers they recruit although they stressed that this would not necessarily make it any easier for them to get a volunteer position as they do not review applicants’ experience. Organisers emphasised that the provision of a model such as Personal Best would be much greater than what

is required of volunteers – *‘what it’s delivering sounds good but our volunteers don’t need that much’, ‘it’s not overly demanding, we just need people who are willing and able to do the job’.*

Capacity to support volunteers from ‘hard to reach groups’

None of the organisations providing volunteers for events felt sufficiently equipped to deal with hard to reach volunteers – *‘things are run on a completely voluntary basis, we don’t have that capacity’, ‘it’s a shoestring operation’.* Oxfam have a limited number of positions that do not require extensive physical activity which would be suitable for people with mobility disabilities but if people with disabilities apply to them they normally refer them on to Attitude is Everything, an organisation they work in partnership with and are more specialised and experienced. They will allow volunteers a two for one ticket whereby for the voluntary contribution provided by the disabled person, they will get a festival ticket for themselves and for their carer or personal assistant. Another festival volunteer recruiter said that they had a disabled applicant last year but that they just couldn’t take him on because the job was too physically demanding. Otherwise, organisers were unsure of the particular requirements of long term unemployed people or young people not in education, employment or training or how they would be able to manage them. However, there was definite resistance to working with ex offenders. Oxfam requires volunteers to be CRB checked and those with a criminal record are refused. Similarly with the UK School Games, the organiser was firmly of the view that the Youth Sports Trust would not be in favour of encouraging ex offenders to be involved. In relation to working with hard to reach groups, the general attitude of volunteer organisers was that implementing specific procedures and practices to recruit and support these types of groups “would make an already difficult job a lot more complicated”. However, the Oxfam volunteer organiser was amenable to the idea of reserving places for volunteers who have participated in the course *‘if we knew they were going to be good’.*

5.4 The potential of a programme to contribute to LSC targets

As pointed out earlier in the report, many providers and practitioners expressed a degree of scepticism regarding the ability of an initiative structured around volunteering and the Olympics theme to directly contribute to LSC targets. This was primarily due to concerns about whether generating formal learning outcomes

at entry and intermediate levels (levels 1 and 2) would be feasible given the distance from the labour market, training and education of potential participants. Personal Best is generating evidence to suggest that achievement of a formal qualification at level 1 is feasible for these groups. Should a Dorset based programme follow a similarly structured approach it seems reasonable to assume that similar target baring outcomes can be generated.

5.5 Potential for employment opportunities

Within the Dorset economy

The opportunity to use the Olympic sailing events as a catalyst to enhance the area's tourism offer and profile is the main vehicle through which sustained economic development and job creation is likely to be generated. Tourism, hospitality and retail are key sectors that traditionally provide entry-level opportunities for low and semi-skilled individuals. However, as recent research⁸ points out trends across these sectors and the potential direction of the local economy may not result in significant increased demand for low and semi-skilled workers:

'There is evidence that employers in the locality are increasingly drawing on migrant labour to fill positions. Moreover, a drive to enhance the local visitor and customer-service offer in the run-up to, during and post-2012 is likely to raise the bar in skills to include foreign languages, softer skills and the higher-level skills in which the locality is severely underrepresented'⁹

An Olympic / volunteering initiative as currently envisaged is likely to enhance general employability skills and, in particular, contribute to raised customer service skills. There will remain a demand for low and semi-skilled and potentially new opportunities that programme participants will have the potential to respond to. A key contribution that any programme will have to make is the motivation of individuals to pursue these opportunities as well as assuring the brokerage of participants into further training that will deliver both the enhanced skills and experience that employers will increasingly be seeking to source.

⁸ Experian (April2007) 'The Skills Impact of the 2012 Sailing Events'. LSC.

⁹ Experian (April2007) 'The Skills Impact of the 2012 Sailing Events' (pg. 20). LSC.

Employment opportunities generated from event volunteering

Volunteer recruiters we spoke to had given little thought to the employment pathways that volunteering could generate. Most were willing to provide references for volunteers on request if they had personally supervised them and were aware that volunteers could include this experience on their CV. UK School Games organisers have plans to develop an online tool that will allow volunteers to learn about other volunteering opportunities. This could help individuals to build up experience that may lead to job opportunities.

Event organisers stressed that an initiative should focus on generic skills (such as communication, team work, customer service) rather than specific to event organisation. As one individual stated; *'there just isn't the job market'*. Very few if any paid positions arising from volunteering at events. Some individuals may go on to work as event security guards or car parking attendants although this type of work would be irregular.

6 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Does the Olympics theme have the potential to drive engagement in volunteering and participation in a programme based around event volunteering?

Although there is a degree of interest in the Olympics, perceptions of the value of opportunities that this will generate are at best mixed. **As a driver of engagement the Olympic theme can best be described at present as a moderate influence.** There are two key challenges that will need to be considered carefully as part of the planning of any Olympic themed initiative.

First is the **perceived value of actual volunteering opportunities in Weymouth.** The challenge here arises not from the nature of volunteering opportunities that will be on offer, but the *context* in which they will take place. Events in London will largely take place in large stadiums providing many Games time volunteers with the opportunity to experience the atmosphere and excitement of competitive events. In contrast, the sailing competition will be a remote event taking place several miles out at sea, watched on large screens. There will be less opportunity to feel part of the event, and thus less opportunity to provide the privilege or access that volunteers would be seeking as a reward for their volunteer efforts.

The second challenge is the **potential value of a guaranteed interview to be a Games time volunteer in London.** London organisers of the Personal Best programme have described this as an important ‘attractor’ to the programme. The question is whether this opportunity, if offered, would prove as attractive to people living in Dorset. There was a clear gender divide in answer to this. Male focus group participants were on the whole interested and said that such an opportunity would motivate them to take part in a programme based around events volunteering. The issue of transport and cost of accommodation in London were factors that concerned most. While some indicated a firm intention that they would ‘find a way around this’ most were more tentative. This clearly suggests that **careful thought should be given as part of planning an initiative to the support that would be needed for people to realise this potential benefit.** Female focus group participants expressed less interest in the chance to be considered for a volunteering role at London based events. Their answers were influenced in the main by the need to maintain family commitments.

Although both these issues raise important considerations for planning an Olympic themed initiative in Dorset neither should be considered as ‘deciders’ of the potential success or failure of an initiative. Despite the chance to volunteer at Games time events being important, it is not the determining factor for engagement in the Personal Best programme. As one study consultee heavily involved in the programme described *‘the Olympics provides the excitement, but it the prospect of work that is the main motivator’.*

Whether or not an opportunity to become a Games time volunteer features in any potential initiative, what is clear from Personal Best is that an Olympic themed programme can produce for participants a ‘wow’ factor and generate a sense of being part of something special that is generally not found in other programmes.

Scale is an important aspect to give consideration to. In London the Personal Best programme alone will be of sufficient scale to achieve profile and generate connection with Games. Consideration should be given as to how a similar effect could be generated in Dorset. There are already a range of initiatives underway and it is likely that even without a large scale investment in a single programme, Olympic themed activity will continue to be generated. This presents two opportunities. Uniting Olympic themed initiatives under a single brand, e.g. Team Dorset, would provide the chance to raise the profile of activities to create recognition and interest locally amongst potential participants and potentially employers. Secondly, greater coordination between providers and practitioners offering volunteering and Olympic themed activity has the potential to widen the reach of such initiatives, enable the targeting of specific groups, and provide signposting and referral pathways between initiatives that can support an individual's progression. It is not clear that these synergies are currently being realised.

6.2 Does a volunteering based initiative have the potential to improve individuals' employability and progression in work or education?

The experience of the Personal Best programme, albeit that the programme is still in the pilot phase, suggests the answer to this question is yes. Organisers of the programme have reported that 13% of participants that 'graduated' from the first phase pilot moved into work following the programme, with 43% moving onto further training and 33% following a volunteering route. In planning a potential initiative for Dorset, it is worth giving consideration to the specific aspects of the programme that are likely to have contributed significantly to this, for it is these that any initiative should seek to replicate. The following factors appear to be of greatest importance:

- The programme is **well resourced and offers the wrap around financial support needed to maintain commitment of participants and to ensure progression**. Childcare funding is available and the programme offers discretionary funding to enable participants to carry out additional training or meet additional expenses (e.g. for clothes or equipment) that will facilitate them to get a job.
- The programme offers **a high level of individualised support delivered end-to-end**. In addition to the 'hand-holding' role of the personal adviser, significant attention is given to individual action planning, the provision of information, advice and guidance and ensuring that all participants have a progression route to move onto once the course is complete.
- **Effective referral into the programme by partner agencies**. This has meant that everyone participating in the programme clearly understands its purpose and objectives prior to getting involved and consequently individuals 'want to be there'.
- The programme **effectively packages the volunteering experience within a wider programme**. Participants are in effect given a taster of what it means to be a volunteer.
- A strong emphasis on **building a sense of collegiality and being part of a team amongst participants** through group activity and practically focused delivery of learning to make the experience real.

6.3 Which groups could a Dorset based programme be targeted at?

The greatest interest in taking part in any initiative was expressed by JSA claimants. This group is closer to the labour market and understandably more motivated and interested in getting work and anything that might support them in this. However, within Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole unemployment is relatively low and actual numbers of individuals on JSA reflect this. There were in the year to June 2007 3,820 people on the JSA register. A small proportion of these were long-term unemployed. Clearly a key consideration here is the extent to which any initiative would offer additionality. There are already a wide range of programmes aimed at supporting JSA claimants back into work. Before targeting any initiative at this group, careful consideration would have to be given to whether existing activity would be displaced. Any programme would also have to be able to demonstrate the likelihood that it would be more effective than current back to work initiatives that are already serving this target group.

There certainly appears to be **greater scope for targeting people registered on Incapacity Benefit.** The Personal Best programme being delivered in Southwark appears to suggest that this is a group that can embrace such a programme. Indeed a programme model of more intensive support is suited to the needs of this group. The fact that the direct focus of the programme's content is not directly on work, but on becoming a volunteer offers a transitional option that can support people to become more prepared for work, education or training. The group is of a sufficient size that motivated and interested individuals should be able to be found. 21,690 people in Dorset county, Bournemouth and Poole were registered on Incapacity Benefit in the year to June 2007.

Lone parents can be a particularly challenging group to engage with. Caring responsibilities place significant restrictions on participation in work, particularly amongst parents of young children. Having said this, **lone parents are a group that would benefit from tailored individualised support such an initiative may offer.** Offering childcare support during the programme and supporting participants to identify suitable childcare options for their chosen progression route would have to be a key consideration. There were 5,040 lone parents receiving benefit in the year to June 2007.

6.4 Who would deliver a programme?

There does appear to be a sufficient range of organisations working across Dorset with the track record and expertise needed to deliver a programme to the potential target groups under discussion. The formation of partnerships would allow organisations with strong project management experience of delivering programmes with output and outcome related targets to work alongside organisations without this experience that might for example be able to offer close working relationships with potential target groups.

A key factor that will need careful consideration in the planning phase of any initiative will be the potential **referral pathways into the programme.** The majority of individuals that any initiative would be likely to target will have had no experience of volunteering or contact with organisations seeking to promote it, such as volunteer bureaux. It will therefore be important for community based organisations to play a major part in driving recruitment for any initiative. The danger of relying too heavily on

more formalised routes such as Jobcentre Plus is that an initiative may simply become part of a portfolio of provision on offer to benefit claimants.

6.5 Timescales – when should a programme start?

Although the Games are to most an event far in the future, the reality in planning terms is that funding and planning of Olympic themed initiatives must be secured within the next 12 months for several reasons. First, if the intention is to link any initiative to the Games time volunteering programme run by LOCOG, participants must have completed the programme by the end of 2010 in order to register in time to be selected as a volunteer. Secondly, the Olympic sailing activity will commence in 2010 with test events. Given the intention to generate a legacy, it's likely that there will be a strong drive locally to amplify these activities and make them a visitor attraction, which has the potential to generate a need for volunteering much earlier on. Efforts should be made to ensure any initiatives are up and running for early 2009.

Key recommendations

- Managing expectations against the types of volunteering opportunities that are likely to be on offer in Portland and Weymouth needs to be a key consideration of a programme. The opportunity to acquire skills and experience that is marketable to employers should instead be the key selling point of a programme.
- The opportunity to receive a guaranteed interview to be a Games time volunteer in London will be an 'attractor' to any programme, and the value of this is likely to increase closer to the Games. However, careful thought should be given as part of planning a programme to the support that would be needed for people to realise this potential benefit.
- Personal Best participants have been motivated by the sense of being part of something special generated by the buzz of being associated with the Olympics and the scale of the graduation celebration events (held at Wembley Stadium). Consideration should be given as to how a similar effect could be generated in Dorset, either through uniting activity under a single brand or enhancing coordination between Olympic themed initiatives.
- Personal Best demonstrates how a volunteering themed initiative can improve individuals' employability and aid progression into work, education or training. Key factors have differentiated the programme from others and supported its success. Where possible, these should be integrated into any Olympic themed initiatives planned in Dorset that aim to engage economically inactive groups.
- In terms of identifying a key audience for any programme, the study's findings suggest that individuals currently on IB that are interested to making a return to work but lack direction to take this forward would be worth targeting. A model providing more intensive support and a choice of progression routes that can support individuals to make the transition back into work would suit this particular group.
- Identifying effective referral pathways into the programme will be key to ensuring that individuals with the potential to benefit most from the programme are successfully recruited. Given the nature and characteristics of the potential target groups it will be important that community based organisations play a major role.
- The timing of this study means that key lessons from initiatives in Dorset trailing approaches that link volunteering and the Olympics have yet to be identified. It will be important to capture these lessons as they emerge over the summer of 2008 in order to inform the development of any new programme. Similarly, a thorough review of the Personal Best evaluation will be needed once it has been published.
- Although the 2012 Games are a remote event for many, planning and piloting of any initiatives needs to commence early on in 2009 in order for lessons to be identified and further funding sought.

ANNEX 1: STUDY CONSULTEES

Stakeholders

Rosie Julian, WPNSA
Mumtaz Bashir, LDA
Liz Mariner, Pecan Training Ltd. Pilot deliverer of Personal Best
Gary Fooks, Dorset County Council
Simon King, Weymouth and Portland Council
Guy Lavender, SWRDA
Louise Stewart, Weymouth and Portland Council
Becky Forrester, Dorset County Council Third Sector Lead
Hazel DeGregorio, Festival Lizards
Dick Goodenough, Oasis Carnival
Judy Dennock, Oxfam Event Volunteers
Richard Barrington, Bath and Bristol School Games

Practitioners

Stuart Dickie, Jobcentre Plus
Lynn Brock, Jobcentre Plus
Sally Scott, Dorset People First Learning Disabilities
Mandy Marshall, Youth Offending Team
Shirley Robson, Next Step
Martin Vowles, Connexions
Rachel Quick, Dorset Youth Association (and V project)
Sue Folden, Weymouth Community Volunteers
Craig Womble, Dorchester Volunteer Centre
Jim Hart Dorchester Volunteer Centre

Providers

Andrew Townson, Bournemouth and Poole College
Glen Thurman, Bournemouth and Poole College
Sarah Colwell, Weymouth College
Karen Reid, Bridge to Work
Jo Edom, Dorset and New Forest Tourism Partnership
Alan Francis, Abilities
Steve Higgins, Abilities
Holly Henderson, WPNSA
Lynn Claridge, Volunteer, NACRO
Elspeth Gregson, Volunteer Coordinator, NACRO

ANNEX 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As part of the study scoping phase a review of literature was proposed to ascertain the available evidence of experience, good practice and key success factors relating to the volunteering programmes that have as an objective the promotion of skills development and employability. A rapid assessment of the main documentary sources was undertaken, the findings of which are presented below. It is worth pointing out in the introduction that there is a body of literature relating to volunteering by socially excluded groups / those currently under-represented in volunteering and this has generated useful insights into the barriers these groups face, and to some extent the approaches that work best. There appears to be very limited, if any substantive evidence on the skills development and employability outcomes generated for these groups as a result of their involvement in volunteering. The literature review has usefully informed the development of the study research tools and has generated some important questions that can be explored in the next stage of the study.

Who volunteers?

'Helping Out', the 2007 national survey of volunteering and charitable giving¹⁰ provides some useful insights into the characteristics of individuals engaged in formal volunteering on a regular basis through a group or organisation.

- Regular formal volunteering is most common among those aged 16-24 (43%)
- Across other age groups people aged between 25 and 34 are least likely to volunteer regularly (34%); those aged 55-64 are most likely to volunteer regularly (42%)
- Levels of formal volunteering did not vary significantly by ethnic origin. However, there were lower rates of regular formal volunteering among those of Asian

¹⁰ Cabinet Office, (2007) 'Helping Out: A national survey of volunteering and charitable giving' 2007.

origin (29%). Previous research suggests that this may be linked to lower rates of participation in volunteering among people born outside the UK¹¹

- Overall the proportion of formal volunteers was lowest among those not working. However, within this group, levels varied according to the reasons for not working. People with a disability or limiting, long-term illness were less likely to volunteer (with only 17% volunteering regularly). Of those unemployed or looking for work 35% volunteered regularly. Volunteering was more common amongst people not working because they were looking after the home or retired (42% for both groups)
- People with no qualifications were less likely to volunteer regularly (31% volunteered regularly).
- The South West region had the highest level of formal volunteering (45%) across government regions, and the lowest percentage of people not involved in any volunteering activity (36%)

Why people volunteer?

The 2007 national survey of volunteering and charitable giving also provides a good starting point to explore individuals' motivation to volunteer. By far the most common reason cited by individuals is the desire to improve things or help people (53% of respondents). This is followed by interest in a specific cause and time to spare (41% respectively) and the desire to meet people and make friends (30% of respondents). **The opportunity to learn skills, enhance employability and aid career progression does not appear to be strongly associated with volunteering.** An interest in learning new skills was given as a reason for volunteering by only 19% of respondents, career progression was mentioned by 7%, and opportunity to gain a recognised qualification highlighted by a mere 2% of respondents. **Those most likely to identify the links between volunteering and skills and employability were those aged between 16 and 24.**

¹¹ Based on analysis of formal volunteering parents of ethnic minority groups in the 2005 Citizenship Survey (Kitchen et al, 2006).

In their analysis of the Young Volunteer Challenge¹², the evaluators make an interesting distinction between **'reactive' volunteers**, i.e. those that were steered into the programme typically by a referral agency or family member, and **'proactive' volunteers** i.e. those clearly aware initially of the benefit of volunteering. For the reactive group, the YVC appears to have responded to demand for volunteering which was often not clearly articulated or specific in ambition, but as a result of young people's need to find *something to do*. This was particularly the case for some young people classified as NEET that had 'fallen out of the system' but wanted a way to re-engage. 'Proactive' volunteers were more clearly able to articulate the benefit of involvement. For those with prior Level 2 or 3 qualifications, the main motivations were gaining experience to further study, develop skills or gain work experience. Those volunteers at Level 1, entry level or with no qualifications had more of a specific focus on gaining work experience, while also wanting to receive training and learn new skills. What is interesting in the evaluations findings is that there was **no apparent relationship between volunteers joining for reactive reasons and their views on the impact of the programme**. As the study points out, even those that were unclear on what to expect from the programme at the outset had a good appreciation of its benefits by the end.

Barriers to volunteering

Over the past ten years a number of substantive research studies¹³ have sought to explore the barriers to volunteering faced by groups such as the unemployed, ex-offenders, people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups. Across these studies a number of key messages emerge: **barriers people face fall into two groups, psychological and practical**; and although the extent to which individuals experience these barriers varies, **many of the issues serving as barriers are cross cutting and shared by the different groups**.

The Institute for Volunteering Research's study into the link between volunteering and social exclusion provides a useful summary of this issues.

¹² DfES (2006) 'Evaluation of Young Volunteer Challenge Pilot Programme', Research Report RR733 (GHK Consulting)

¹³ Institute for Volunteering Research (2004), 'Volunteering for All? Exploring the link between volunteering and social exclusion'; Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1995) 'The determinants of Volunteering'; Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1996) 'Involving volunteers from underrepresented groups'.

Psychological Barriers

- The public image of volunteering. The perception that volunteering is an activity carried out by white middle-class, middle-aged people remains a commonly held belief. Researchers found the most commonly held perception of volunteering as ‘work without pay’ and awareness of the full range of roles available to volunteers was limited. Many assumed that volunteers raised funds or carried out ‘social service’ type tasks. The reciprocal nature of volunteering was far less appreciated among those that had not volunteered. Researchers found a good level of understanding amongst study participants with disabilities, but a rejection of the traditional paradigm of volunteering that cast disabled people as the recipients rather than the providers or volunteering. Within BME communities in particular, volunteering is often predominantly seen as informal, i.e. not carried out within mainstream organisations and groups but between individuals and households. Among ex-offenders the study found limited understanding of the value of volunteering and a perception that it was of limited relevance to their lives. Although some appreciated that volunteering may help them to find paid work, these were seen as mutually exclusive. This group generally understood volunteering as a narrow range of activities which, to some, was too close to what they had experienced as part of the criminal justice system.
- Fear of over-commitment. 56% of respondents to a volunteer survey conducted as part of the study felt that not having enough spare time put people off volunteering. Volunteering was commonly associated with onerous and inflexible time commitments, perceived to present particular issues for certain groups with significant home commitments (for example, within Asian families) or health issues limiting individuals ability to consistently meet commitments (those with long term illnesses). The study found that many participants over estimated the time commitment associated with volunteering. One group of ex-offenders, for example, thought that volunteers gave an average of 16 – 20 hours a week. The 1997 National Survey of Volunteering found that on average volunteers gave four hours per week.
- Lack of confidence. The study found that people particularly lacked confidence in the skills and experience that would be needed to be a volunteer. Language was an issue raised amongst groups for whom English was their second language. Confidence to volunteer in an unfamiliar environment without the necessary support was a commonly raised factor across groups.
- Other people’s attitudes. Particular to ex-offenders was an assumption that many organisations would not ‘take a chance on them’. Prejudice towards volunteers among the paid staff of an organisation was a common belief, and associated with this was the issue of ‘pigeonholing’ i.e. assuming that because a volunteer was Asian, they would want to work with Asian client groups for example.
- Fear of losing welfare benefits. Although volunteering does not result in benefit loss in most instances, the study found many misperceptions and a general lack of understanding on this issue which made people fearful and generally put them off volunteering. Negative experiences in raising the issue with Jobcentre Plus staff not fully versed in the regulations in this area were also highlighted.

Practical Issues

- Difficulty in finding out about volunteering opportunities. A lack of publicity was identified as a key obstacle as was the simple fact of not having been asked if

they would like to volunteer. Evidence suggests that word of mouth is the most common route into volunteering. People from socially excluded groups are less likely to have contact with other people that volunteer and therefore less likely to be asked to get involved.

- Over-formal recruitment procedures. Lengthy application processes, formal interviews and police checks were found to be putting people off volunteering. This was particularly the case for those that had little previous experience of such procedures, had difficulties with literacy or perceived that their particular needs would not be understood (such as people with specific disabilities that require the adaptation of equipment or resources). The need to provide references was an issue raised by ex-offenders in particular.
- Poor follow-up of new recruits. Time lag between an initial enquiry or application and response to this was cited as a major off-putting factor for many people that affected their confidence and in some instances gave people the impression that they were not suitably qualified or experienced to become a volunteer.
- A physically inaccessible volunteering environment. Transport was highlighted as an issue particularly experienced by people living in rural communities lacking access to private transport or a reliable public transport alternative. Accessible transport and building access were raised as priority issues for those with disabilities.
- Inability to meet the costs of volunteering. Cost is a factor that affected all groups that participated in the study, but was a particularly important issue for people with disabilities in need of extra support to enable them to take on a volunteering role. The study highlighted problems resulting from the inaccessibility to Access to Work funding for voluntary work. The scheme funds travel, equipment or support needed for people with disabilities to fulfil work responsibilities.

Attracting and retaining volunteers

In this section we draw on the findings from evaluations of the Young Volunteer Challenge (YVC) and Pre-Volunteer Programme, developed for the Commonwealth games, together with lessons from other studies that explore the role of volunteering within programmes that have a wider remit.

Attracting Volunteers

Although the Young Volunteer Challenge was initially targeted at young people with a propensity to move into HE (qualified to level 3), in practice the programme **attracted participants with a diverse range of educational attainment**. Equal numbers of volunteers had levels 1, 2 and 3 as their highest qualification and a significant minority were reported to have come into YVC from below level 1. Practical issues in recruiting eligible young people (based on criteria relating to family income) account for this in part, however the study also found that **YVC providers looked to beneficiary groups that they had traditionally worked with as a source of potential participants, accounting for the large numbers recruited from the NEET group**. 38% of participants were unemployed prior to joining the programme.

The evaluation of the Commonwealth Games Legacy programme¹⁴, similarly reported the recruitment of a diverse range of participants to the Pre-Volunteer Programme. 20% of participants came from black and ethnic minority communities and 5% were people with disabilities. Large numbers of young people took part (both from NEET groups and those already enrolled in FE on leisure and hospitality courses, for example) and the programme also attracted various groups of benefit claimants (lone parents, long term unemployed). The evaluation strongly points to the **prestige of the Games and the prospect of involvement in them as the main factor attracting involvement in the programme**.

In terms of the strategies that proved successful in recruiting from groups traditionally under-represented among volunteers the following lessons have been pointed out:

- Direct marketing, the Connexions service and ‘word of mouth’ provided the most effective methods for recruiting participants to the Young Volunteer Challenge. Schools and colleges, which were initially anticipated as strong recruitment channels delivered few participants, as the programme was reportedly seen as ‘competition’ to the programmes they offered. Media campaigns, through local TV, radio and press generally didn’t generate a high response and were considered too ‘broad a brush’.
- Developing an outreach approach appears to have had particular success in ensuring that under-represented groups from across the North West region had an opportunity to participate in the Pre-Volunteer Programme leading up to the

¹⁴ Ecotec, ‘An Evaluation of the Commonwealth Games Legacy Programme’.

Commonwealth games. Of particular importance was the role of volunteer advisors who played a pivotal role in recruiting participants to the programme.

- Building the capacity of people lacking the confidence to volunteer, through open days for example to enable potential volunteers to familiarise themselves with the environment, people involved in running activities and the content of the programme they may become involved in.
- User-friendly recruitment, by for example, simplifying form filling, informal chats rather than interviews to make the volunteering experience less daunting.

Retaining Volunteers

The evaluation of the Young Volunteer Challenge points to a number of factors that influenced participants' decisions to stay on the programme. Of great importance appears to be real opportunities for volunteers to influence placement choice and the tailoring of placements and development opportunities to match individual capabilities and ambitions. Financial incentive was also identified as a defining factor. Three quarters of participants stated that they could not have continued the programme without it. Giving the incentive was clearly an enabler for volunteering rather than an attractor. The weekly financial incentive offered to participants was reported to have provided a greater incentive to continuing with the programme than the completion award.

The evaluation of Manchester's Pre-Volunteer Programme presents other lessons, amongst them the value of celebrating success through a formal 'graduation ceremony' on completion of the events volunteering training course. The role of volunteer advisors appears to have been key in maintaining participants awareness of up coming events at which they could use their new found skills and enabling programme graduates to apply and successfully act as volunteers at the Commonwealth Games themselves.

Links between volunteering and qualifications and employability

Somewhat surprisingly there appears to have been very little research carried out into the link between volunteering and employability, and evaluation of the types of programmes that seek to address this. In part, this may be explained by the lack of emphasis that volunteers themselves place on qualifications and employability as a reason for and benefit of their involvement in volunteering. The 2007 national survey of volunteering and charitable giving directly asked about this subject and found that less

than one-quarter of volunteers reported that it was important that their volunteering have them a chance to improve their employment prospects, while just over one-tenth said that the chance to gain qualifications was important. Young people aged 16 – 34 were the group most likely to value volunteering for these reasons, as were people from Asian and Black minority ethnic groups.

There is some evidence from previous Jobcentre Plus sponsored programmes that voluntary work while unemployed was an important factor in maintaining motivation and confidence during individuals' search for employment and in some cases increased the amount of job search activity carried out by individuals¹⁵. A study into the links between volunteering and employability among unemployed people found that the majority (88%) of people that remained unemployed on completion of the volunteer work believed that this experience would help them to get a job. 41% of those that had moved into employment believed that their volunteering experience had helped them to get their current job¹⁶.

The Pre-Volunteer Programme also provides examples of positive outcomes, particularly in terms of qualifications. 2134 participants on the programme successfully gained one of the two level 1 event volunteering qualifications designed specifically for the programme. The programme's evaluation points to 160 job entries that were achieved as a result of volunteers' participation in the programme. Elsewhere, research has indicated that volunteering within voluntary and community sector organisations is an effective route into employment into the sector¹⁷.

The evaluation of the Young Volunteer Challenge paid specific attention to participants' outcomes, which as pointed out below focus substantively on the 'softer' factors that influence direction of travel rather than providing a direct link with employability.

- Three quarters of the volunteers had no firm plans for the future when they started YVC. This had reduced to four out of ten volunteers on completion. While it would be expected that the figure would naturally reduce over time, most

¹⁵ DWP 'Stepping stones to employment' Research Report No.71

¹⁶ Cambridge Policy Consultants, (2001), 'Links between volunteering and employability'.

¹⁷ Rock Solid Social Research on behalf of the UK Voluntary Sector Workforce Hub. (2006) 'Pathways into employment in the voluntary and community sector – An evidence review'.

volunteers felt that YVC had a major or significant influence over their future (or anticipated future) destination.

- The influence of YVC is not, however, shown in terms of immediate outcomes or in terms of hard outcomes in the six months after leaving the programme.
- Over three quarters of volunteers at Levels 2 and 3 were in education/training, employment, or further volunteering in the months after finishing YVC, although it is likely that many of these would have progressed anyway.
- Volunteers themselves report that the value of YVC has been in supporting progression to either a course they are more sure they want to do or into better-quality employment.
- For the volunteers entering with few or no qualifications, the distance travelled was in terms of improved confidence and the ability to handle a 'work situation'. YVC did not, however, in itself support a significant increase in terms of progression to positive outcomes for these groups.
- There is evidence that YVC has shifted perceptions of volunteering, especially with regards to what it involves. In particular, after the YVC experience young people were significantly more likely to see volunteering as fun and a worthwhile job.

Critical issues for the study arising from the findings of this review of literature

The research carried out for the scoping phase of this project highlights three key issues that need to be considered in the fieldwork phase of the study.

The types of volunteering and employment opportunities that a potential programme might generate. The Pre-Volunteer Programme for the Commonwealth Games, and London's piloting of the Personal Best Programme both focus on providing volunteers with the generic skills necessary to become involved in the staging of large scale public events (i.e. customer relations, public safety, conflict resolution and health and safety). Key questions for this study are:

- Is this model of a volunteering programme appropriate in Dorset given the specific types of volunteers that a programme might attract?
- What opportunities will exist (other than the Games) at which volunteers might continue to utilise their new skills, particular in the years running up to the Games?
- Are the skills that such a programme would generate of potential value to employers?
- Are there opportunities to link a volunteering programme more directly with the specific labour demands that the Games in Dorset will generate (e.g. retail and tourism, sports and marine recreational activities)?

The content / 'offer' of a volunteering programme. Evidence suggests that the opportunity to develop skills or achieve qualifications is not a key factor that attracts people to volunteer. Consequently, the study needs to address the following questions:

- How might skills and work-related aspects of a volunteer programme be 'packaged' in order to attract volunteers?

- What does this mean in terms of the types of organisations that might be involved in delivering the programme (third sector involvement, private sector involvement)?
- What specific components does a volunteer programme need to include to ensure that participants have the opportunity to put into practice what they have learnt?
- Is the availability to volunteer at the Games a pre-requisite to involvement in any programme?

Market-testing with potential programme participants. In our proposal we set out eight potential beneficiary groups to involve in focus groups as part of the study: jobseekers under 25; jobseekers over 45; workless individuals from BME groups; lone parents; people with disabilities (IB claimants); ex-offenders; young ex-offenders (male); young ex-offenders (female). The research has raised the following questions:

- Is there a need in the focus groups to differentiate between those who have experience as a volunteer and those who have not?
- Three focus groups with ex-offenders were proposed. It this too many given potential challenges to engaging this group in volunteering highlighted in the research?
- Should a group focusing on those in employment with low level skills and qualifications be included to explore what type of volunteering opportunity might motivate them to strengthen their skills and qualifications?
- Are there other more specific groups that the study should consult with?

ANNEX 3: SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

IB Group Weymouth

Experience of Volunteering

- Two out of nine participants have volunteering experience – their main motivation for involvement is the social interaction provided and the opportunity to share skills with others.
- Other participants had mixed views on the potential value and benefits of volunteering – it would depend what was involved and the attitude of the Jobcentre towards doing volunteer work (some confusion about whether volunteering was allowed). Most had not considered volunteering because they had not been made aware of any opportunities.

Views on the Olympics

- Most couldn't see any potential benefits for them. Only one participant identified the potential for the Olympics to generate more and better jobs. Most people thought that jobs that will be created will be jobs that people don't want. Lowly paid.
- Several participants strongly viewed volunteering at the Olympics as unpaid work when what was needed was jobs – why target people that are out of work?
- Participants weren't convinced that volunteering at the events would be a valuable thing for them to do – how would it actually help them get a job? There was some interest in volunteering opportunities in London – but not overwhelming.

Views on a 'Personal Best' styled programme

- Participants were not perturbed by the idea of spending up to eight weeks on a programme.
- Gaining a qualification was not a great turn on.
- Participants were unanimous in wanting practical experience that employers would value. Expressed uncertainty about how an event volunteering course could contribute in this respect. Very interested in team working, customer service and leadership skills.
- Community based setting is important.

JSA Group Bournemouth (under 25)

Experience of Volunteering

- One participant has experience of volunteering – he likes the social life this provides.

- Other participants had never really thought about volunteering before – they generally associated it with overseas aid work and support for charities. On probing, they were able to talk about potential benefits, such as the opportunity to gain new skills. Most thought working as part of a team on community projects would be more beneficial and more fun, than say, volunteering in a charity shop.

Views on the Olympics

- It's over hyped. Participants couldn't see how it would generate a legacy. Some appreciated that there would be new jobs mainly in tourism and hospitality.
- Participants were generally enthused about the opportunity to volunteer at Games time events in London – but they wanted to be part of the action. Handing out the medals.
- Sailing wasn't of particular interest to most. They were more interested in volunteering at Cultural Olympiad activities.

Views on a 'Personal Best' styled programme

- Participants were keen on anything that would help them get a job.
- Valued the idea of a qualification at the end of it and thought that they would stick with a course because of this.
- Not convinced about the actual value of event volunteering skills. They benefit would be in the generic skills that could be offered – leadership and team working.

JSA Group Weymouth (over 35)

Experience of Volunteering

- Two participants had volunteered when previously unemployed. One of these individuals described having found it very beneficial, providing a focus to the day, enabling him to meet new people and providing him with references that helped him get a job. The other individual volunteered in relation to a hobby and was mainly motivated by social reasons.
- Other participants hadn't volunteered previously or thought about it. Having been in employment they felt they didn't previously have the time.

Views on the Olympics

- All didn't feel particularly well informed about the Olympics. They were not averse to volunteering but were solely focused on getting a job. Volunteering at the Olympics was seen as an aside from this and not something that would generate work for them.
- There was a good level of interest in volunteering in London. Most viewed that they would find ways around logistical barriers that might prevent their involvement.

Views on a 'Personal Best' styled programme

- Very mixed views on the Personal Best model. Only really interested in participating in something that will lead to a job. Didn't particularly see the value of event volunteering in this respect.
- Could see value in the course if there were specific modules on health and safety for example – skills that employers value.

Lone Parent Focus Group

Experience of Volunteering

- Little knowledge of or experience of volunteering. Not aware of opportunities and wouldn't have the time if they were aware of them because of the pressures of bringing up young families.

Views on the Olympics

- Participants were fairly interested in participating in local volunteering activity for the games. They wouldn't mind stewarding. The idea of going to London wasn't attractive for logistical reasons and concerns about how family responsibilities would be managed.
- Less negativity about the Olympic events in Weymouth in this group than in some others.

Views on a 'Personal Best' styled programme

- Mixed interest in an event volunteering course. Some thought that it would be a good route back toward work and timing wise would fit into when their children were starting school. Others were unsure about the potential time commitment and how valuable it would actually be in helping to get a decently paid job. You need skills and experience to get a job – would this course provide this?
- The overriding concern about getting involved in anything was childcare.

Young Ex-Offenders

Experience of Volunteering

- One participant had volunteered at Glastonbury. He did it to get access to the festival and didn't consider that he had gained any new skills through the experience.
- Other participants hadn't volunteered and were not particularly interested. No one had ever talked to them about volunteering options.
- On probing they thought that volunteering might make people trust them more and provide references that might help them get jobs.

Views on the Olympics

- Not enthusiastic or interested by the Olympics at all. Didn't see the relevance to their lives. Not particularly interested in sport.

- Several had already been involved in sailing courses (as part of other support programmes). They didn't speak about this with any particular enthusiasm or interest.

Views on a 'Personal Best' styled programme

- Expressed interest in gaining generic skills that employers would value, but were less interested in event volunteering as a qualification. Would be more interested in getting CSCS cards etc. – industry and job relevant qualifications that will actually help them get a job.
- Several participants lived out in rural areas and the main issue was transportation and meeting the cost of attending a course.

BME Women

Experience of Volunteering

- All participants had significant experience of volunteering either through community association that they were members of, or with schools that their children attend. Outreach (volunteering) within their communities is the norm.

Views on the Olympics

- Could see far more potential around the Cultural Olympiad than the actual sailing events. Couldn't visual what a volunteering opportunity would look like in relation to the events. They were more interested in being engaged in activities to promote cultural understanding and showcasing different cultures.
- Confused with the idea that volunteering at the Olympics could motivate and provide opportunities for people to get back into work – struggled to make the links.

Views on a 'Personal Best' styled programme

- Very interested in any opportunity that might help them translate their existing voluntary experience into something that is marketable to employers.
- More interested in the generic elements of the course that might provide them with more experience and knowledge around leadership, team working and management.