

The Commonwealth Games Pre Volunteer Programme (PVP) as a catalyst for addressing social exclusion

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This article reviews the effects of the Pre Volunteer Programme (PVP), a unique scheme connected to the XVII Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002 that offered individuals from some of the most disadvantaged areas across the north-west the opportunity to participate as sports volunteers. In so doing, the PVP acted as a catalyst for addressing social exclusion in the City.

The XVII Commonwealth Games held in Manchester in 2002 were remarkable for recruiting the largest volunteer force the United Kingdom has seen in peacetime: 10,500 unpaid individuals helped with the organisation and smooth running of the games (International Centre for Research and Consultancy at Manchester Metropolitan University and UK Sport, 2003). Some of the volunteers were PVP graduates.

The aim of this article is to provide an overview of the PVP. It will look at why the research was conducted, what methodology was adopted and what the PVP involved, and will present the findings of one particular case study: the A6 Corridor in South Manchester.

Rationale

The value of volunteers in sport in the UK is readily accepted, but not always well publicised. Until recently there had been very little research conducted into either the voluntary sports sector or volunteers in sport. The first attempt to quantify the value of sports volunteers in the UK and to identify the roles undertaken by individuals was published by the English Sports Council (1996). These findings have since been superseded by a repeat study (Sport England, 2003). Latterly Nichols (2003), the Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, Loughborough University (2005) and Nichols and Collins (2005) have published work relating to sports volunteers in the UK, whilst Cuskelly *et al* (2006) have attempted to fill the gap from an international perspective.

By comparison, even less research has been conducted into volunteers' experiences at international sporting events. The exceptions to this are Solberg's (2003) study assessing the economic value of the contribution of volunteers at major sporting events, plus Warrior (2001), Warrior (2002), Jones and Stokes (2003) and the International Centre for Research and Consultancy at Manchester Metropolitan University and UK Sport (2003), all of whom focused on data collection at the



Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games in an attempt to evaluate the volunteers' motivations and experiences. This article attempts to remedy the lack of general sports volunteer research by providing an insight into a unique sports volunteer training scheme, linked to an international sporting event.

The third reason for the investigation was a personal one. As a volunteer at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002, I was able to develop an empathy with and an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the volunteers. Given that volunteering can be undertaken for a variety of reasons and in pursuit of a variety of goals, my involvement could be characterised by what Parker (1997) defines as altruistic volunteering (the giving of time and effort unselfishly to help others), cause-serving volunteering (the promoting of a cause in which one believes) and leisure volunteering (seeking a leisure experience). My motivations for volunteering were therefore various, and overall it was a satisfying experience contributing to a worthwhile enterprise.

Methodology

A qualitative approach was adopted. Prior to the Games this consisted of an analysis of secondary source materials, such as programme monitoring and annual report data, and an in-depth interview with a PVP co-ordinator. During the Games participant observations were conducted. The data was collected over a period of eleven months from September 2001 to August 2002.

Background

The Commonwealth Games, along with the summer Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup, the UEFA European Championships and the IAAF World Athletic Championships, is defined as a 'mega event'. Such status is awarded after competitive bidding to an international federation and often involves significant infrastructure investment (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002). A mega event is also determined by size: it is classified as the biggest, and thus differs from a 'major sporting event', of which there are three distinct categories (see Table 1).

Table 1: Defining features and categories of 'major sporting events'

(UK Sport 1999 cited in DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002)

These events are of three different kinds:

1. **Calendar events.** These are a regular part of the international calendar for that sport; no bidding is involved. They are generally considered to be commercially successful: for example, the Wimbledon tennis championships or the Test series in cricket.
2. **One-off events.** These attract substantial interest in the UK, and the bidding for the international TV rights is usually competitive: for example, the rugby union and cricket World Cups.
3. **Showcase events.** These events have the potential to boost the development of sport in the UK, provide the UK with a good chance of winning medals, improve the image and influence of UK sport overseas and/or involve regions of the UK. Bidding for these events can be competitive: for example, the World Judo Championships, the World Disability Athletics Championships or the European Show Jumping Championships.

When the hosting of either a mega or a major sporting event is being considered, the decisive factor is not necessarily the size of the event or the type of sport, but the level of infrastructure investment required. For example, a bidder (e.g. Manchester 2002 Ltd) will not be the sole funder if there is a successful outcome. Likewise central government, whilst usually making additional monies available, will not control the bidding process. In Manchester, a well-managed bid resulted in high levels of infrastructure investment and the very successful hosting of a mega event, the XVII Commonwealth Games.

Some of the Games events were held in East Manchester, which until the 1970s was quite a prosperous area, containing a variety of manufacturing industries and having a resident population of around sixty thousand. However in the last thirty years the area has suffered a significant decline, with factories, mills and warehouses closing, leading to job losses and the decline of the population to thirty thousand. Furthermore the area has lost 13 per cent of the population since 1991 and in 2001 it was ranked twenty-eighth among disadvantaged areas nationally (New East Manchester Urban Regeneration Company, 2001). Exacerbating its decline, the area received little if any investment during this period (Jones and Stokes, 2003). As a mega event, the Commonwealth Games therefore acted as a catalyst for regenerating East Manchester (Manchester City Council, 2001). Specifically, the Games looked to boost jobs and the living standards of Manchester's inhabitants by:

1. Creating a superb range of sporting venues for local communities and elite athletes.
2. Training local people in a range of skills to equip them for future jobs.
3. Pump-priming the economic regeneration of the city, attracting jobs, businesses and families to Manchester (Manchester 2002, 2002a).



Where cities are awarded a sporting event, these events are increasingly used as a means to initiate other projects: for example, the building of local community facilities and housing, the creation of jobs and local economic regeneration. This occurred at the Olympic Games in Barcelona (1992) and Atlanta (1996) (Essex and Chalkley, 1998; French and Disher, 1997). Likewise, Sydney used the 2000 Games as a catalyst to improve the city's leisure and sporting facilities (Chalip, 2000). New capital projects can also benefit local communities by tackling social exclusion. For example, broader benefits such as the development of self-esteem and transferable skills are particularly beneficial for people who are ordinarily more likely to be excluded from community activities through poverty, disability or ethnicity (Long and Sanderson, 1998). The Social Exclusion Unit (1998) (cited in Collins and Kay, 2003) defines social exclusion as being where individuals or an area suffer from unemployment, poor skills, low income, high crime, poor health and family breakdown. Manchester therefore went beyond capital projects and invested in the PVP scheme, an initiative like no other which would offer educational qualifications to disadvantaged groups in the city. In so doing, Manchester justified its case for investing in a mega event whilst at the same time addressing social exclusion.

Partnerships

The DCM/Strategy Unit (2002) suggests that mega events require strong partnerships between sport, the private sector and public authorities if they are to be delivered successfully. If promoted in isolation, sport is unlikely to have widespread or long-lasting effects. Thus the PVP's strategic direction was based on partnership working. Its overall strategy was directed by a central steering committee, composed of members from the private, public and voluntary sectors. For example, the chair was the head of economic initiatives at Manchester City Council, the programme manager was seconded from Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Council and other members were drawn from Manchester 2002 Ltd, employment services, Sport England and further education. Additionally, representatives of local resident's forums and the PVP co-ordinators contributed to the policy decisions made by the central steering committee. The volunteer programme manager, a position within Manchester 2002 Ltd, undertook overall responsibility for and management of the PVP.

The Pre Volunteer Programme (PVP)

When the Pre Volunteer Programme (PVP) was launched in 2000, it set a precedent: Manchester 2002 was the first Commonwealth Games to design and implement such an initiative. The PVP offered people from some of the most disadvantaged areas across the north-west the opportunity to participate as sports volunteers, enabling them to undertake accredited training and to gain experience through volunteering at a major international sporting event. As its primary focus was addressing social exclusion, the PVP scheme encouraged people from specific target populations to get involved: for example, those living in defined regeneration areas across the north-west; young people aged 16–24 years; unemployed people; members of various ethnic communities; and people with disabilities. In this way the PVP contributed to the desire of Manchester, as host of the VXII Commonwealth Games, to address social exclusion.

The PVP, one of six projects funded through Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) money, formed part of the 2002 North West Opportunities programme (Warrior, 2001). The SRB is an amalgamation of various projects by government departments that provides financial support to regeneration initiatives in England and is administered at regional level by Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). The primary objective of the SRB is to enhance the quality of life of local people in areas of need: for example, through education, employment, skills training or more general occupational opportunities, such as volunteering. Additional funding for the PVP was provided through the European Social Fund, the Further Education Council and the private sector. The recruitment company Adecco was the official sponsor of the PVP (Manchester 2002, 2002a).

The scheme was delivered across the sixteen North West SRB areas, with four additional associate areas (see Table 2).

Table 2: The PVP delivery areas

SRB areas within the City of Manchester	SRB areas within Greater Manchester	SRB areas in Lancashire	SRB areas in Merseyside	Associate SRB areas
1. A6 Corridor: postcode areas M11–M16, M19 2. East Manchester 3. Cheetham and Broughton	4. Bury 5. Rochdale 6. Trafford 7. Wythenshawe 8. Bolton 9. Oldham 10. Salford 11. Tameside	12. Blackburn and Darwen	13. Liverpool Central 14. Speke/Garston 15. Halewood 16. Wirral	A. Hyndburn B. North Manchester C. Halton D. Stockport

The PVP aimed to ensure that opportunities were available to all individuals and that a significant number were recruited from disadvantaged communities across the region. As an experimental and highly innovative programme, PVP offered the inhabitants of Manchester the following:

- Training leading to an educational qualification.
- An objective to attain.
- Restored or increased self-confidence.
- A guaranteed interview with the Commonwealth Games volunteer programme.

The PVP also sought to create a database of volunteers across the north-west region, which could be used for other major sporting events and for general volunteering opportunities after the Commonwealth Games (Bashir, 1999).

The components of PVP

The training that PVP participants received was accredited and designed specifically to help them develop the skills and knowledge needed to act as an event volunteer or to get involved in sports development. To enable the scheme to be as inclusive as possible, it was free to people living within the designated SRB areas and no formal entry requirements or selection process was involved. The programme had three stages:

Stage One

This consisted of a thirty-hour Greater Manchester Open College Network (GMOCN) Foundation Level 1 award unit. The course included: customer care; background to the leisure industry and Commonwealth Games; first aid; health and safety; and assisting in the organising of a sports event. Students undertook fourteen components in total, addressing various learning outcomes by submitting completed worksheets and witness statements.

Stage Two

After successful completion of Stage One, PVP participants could elect to progress to Stage Two. This consisted of an additional sixty hours leading to a BETC award, including career development, and involved two further units of study: the first considered in greater detail venue safety, security, stewarding, crowd control and emergency first aid; the second covered venue operations, administration, basic IT and customer relations.

Stage Three

This stage offered volunteers the chance to progress to mainstream further education by undertaking a range of relevant courses. Qualifications relating to Games skills, regional needs and post-Games employability were offered: for example, Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) award in stewarding; Open College Network (OCN) courses in security; National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in customer care, or sport, recreation and allied occupations; Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT); or European Computer Driving Licence.

A theme running through each of the three stages was 'extra learning'. Whilst the primary focus of the PVP was to provide participants with skills that could be used during the Games, some of the training was generic: for example, first aid, customer care or health and safety. This offered participants transferable skills that they could still benefit from if they chose not to apply to be a volunteer during the Games. The qualitative nature of the study did not allow for an investigation into how strong the overall 'pull of volunteering' was, rather than the potential opportunity available as a result of completing the course. To establish whether this pull was significant and whether the scheme could be marketed and run for a variety of contexts, further research would be necessary.

PVP recruitment

Each PVP had an allocated co-ordinator who was responsible for recruiting to the scheme. This led to different procedures being followed across the SRB regions. In the



A6 Corridor, postcard flyers with prepaid reply slips were distributed, and five hundred houses in the Brunswick area received leaflets. The A6 website had a PVP page added, with a facility to enable volunteers to sign up. Posters advertising the scheme were displayed in community venues, such as doctors' surgeries and libraries. However, many volunteers got involved simply through being told about the scheme by other participants. Delivered in conjunction with further education institutions in the north-west, courses were sometimes held in educational establishments, although more accessible and perhaps more user-friendly venues, such as local leisure centres, job opportunity units and careers offices, were also used. The major attractions of the PVP were its accessibility, informality and flexibility: for example, to make the programme as inclusive as possible, all marketing materials were produced in a variety of languages.

Case study: the A6 Corridor PVP

This particular PVP scheme, based in the A6 Partnership office at Longsight, South Manchester, was set up in March 2001 and ceased operation in March 2003. The scheme had actually been operating for two years prior to 2001, but with only limited success and only loose connections with the Commonwealth Games volunteer programme.

Twenty-two PVP courses had been organised in the A6 area by October 2001. Overall, this area exceeded all expectations, for by June 2002 650 individuals had made enquiries about the PVP and 220 had completed one of the three training courses (Table 3). In view of the fact that the A6 Corridor was probably the most diverse of all the sixteen North West SRB areas involved in the scheme, this was a considerable achievement. The people who engaged with the PVP scheme were 70 per cent men and 30 per cent women; a quarter came from ethnic minorities (including people from Africa, Bangladesh, China, Europe, Iran, Jordan, Korea, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Turkey); and they ranged in age from 16 to 76, with well over half aged between 16 and 24. Participants included employed and unemployed people, single parents, army training corps cadets, lesbians and gay men, people attending bail hostels, asylum seekers, people with criminal backgrounds and others coping with drug and alcohol addictions.

Table 3: A6 Corridor participation in PVP, June 2002

Outcomes	Targets for PVP in A6 Partnership SRB Area	Actual numbers achieved
Number of people resident in target area who made enquiries about PVP	140	650 (of whom 210 from ethnic minorities)
Number of people resident in target area who completed one of the three training courses and obtained a qualification	50	220 (of whom 66 from ethnic minorities and 78 aged 16–24 years)
Number of people resident in target area who secured employment for six months, for a minimum of thirty hours a week, having attended a PVP course	20	Potential to achieve 16 (of whom 7 from ethnic minorities)
Number of PVP graduates who have applied to the Commonwealth Games Volunteer Programme	140	Potential to achieve 115 (of whom 66 from ethnic minorities)

Results of PVP

The organisers of the PVP originally set a target of recruiting and training 1,500 individuals from all the SRB areas. By June 2002, the month before the Games were due to commence, over 2,000 participants had graduated throughout the region (Jones and Stokes, 2003). Also in 2002 the scheme received international recognition from the United Nations (Manchester 2002, 2002a, and Manchester 2002, 2002b). Whilst such recognition endorsed the overall success of the PVP, the scheme was not without its challenges.

Reaching out to disadvantaged groups

Observations during the Games made it clear that the co-ordinator was crucial to the PVP's overall success. Without such a role the scheme would undoubtedly have failed. The co-ordinators had to reach out to the volunteers, respecting their social circumstances and not demonstrating any prejudice. For example, crèche facilities were provided to enable some single parents to attend training sessions, and all participants had their travelling costs to the training venues reimbursed. Many PVP co-ordinators had an obvious empathy with the volunteers in their charge, and showed a deep understanding of their competencies and levels of confidence – as demonstrated, for example, when they helped volunteers with late-night travel arrangements after the opening ceremony of the Games, or when they helped motivate them in quiet periods during shifts, when they were waiting for events to begin. This empathy developed as the co-ordinators got to know the volunteers during their training sessions.

Drop-out rate

In the A6 Corridor PVP, there was one occasion when it was necessary to cancel a course owing to shortage of numbers and two other occasions where training courses

were merged to make them viable. With a scheme of this nature, some drop-out for personal reasons or because of waning of interest was only to be expected. This was perhaps a downside to the flexible, accessible approach of PVP, which also made tracking some volunteers difficult. The courses followed a rolling programme with a new one beginning approximately every month.

Continuity and sustaining motivation

It was the PVP co-ordinator's role to ensure that the volunteers were motivated and enjoyed the training sessions. As an incentive, all participants were offered the chance once a month to ride the track at the Velodrome. Also, some participants used the Aquatics Centre; some non-swimmers, particularly Asian women, were offered free lessons. In a similar way, some training schemes developed a real esprit de corps by forming five-a-side football teams: for example, Moss Side PVPs beat Cheetham Hill PVPs, and the results were published in a newsletter. The use of Commonwealth Games venues for these motivational opportunities seems to have paid dividends, making the volunteers realise that such facilities were accessible at a community level and not solely for elite athletes.

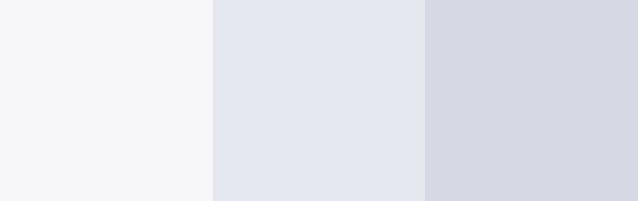
'Graduate aftercare' was an issue that became apparent as the scheme progressed. Whilst in the A6 Corridor a database of volunteers' details was eventually maintained, at first this was extremely difficult for the co-coordinator to manage, simply because of the volume of enquiries and the number of graduates passing through the scheme. The issue was resolved by enlisting a volunteer to enter the details onto the database. Without such support the co-ordinator would have been unable to keep the system in operation. It also enabled the co-ordinator to offer an 'aftercare' system by which the volunteers' details could be easily accessed. This led to them being offered appropriate opportunities to utilise their newly obtained skills and knowledge: for example, graduates helped out at various events such as the Salford Triathlon, Unity Festival in Chorlton, Dream Walk, Brunswick Fun Day and Manchester MELA.

The variety of volunteers

Whilst a feeling of group membership tended to develop quite naturally amongst participants in the same course, it was far more challenging to inculcate a sense of belonging in the wider sense. This was perhaps not surprising, given the numbers of individuals taking the courses and the eighteen-month time scale involved. Although connected via geographical location, the individuals were significantly diverse in their individual make-up. Age, gender, ethnicity, disability, nationality and cultural norms (such as days of worship) were the most important distinguishing factors.

Acceptance of volunteers by Commonwealth Games

It was anticipated that a total of 140 volunteers would be recruited for the Commonwealth Games from the A6 Corridor PVP, but as the scheme progressed it became apparent that the potential existed for only 115 volunteers (Table 3). In view of the fact that there were 650 enquires about the scheme, this final total could perhaps be viewed as disappointing. It raises the question of whether the figure could have been improved if support had been different. However, whilst the intention of the PVP was to feed into the Game's volunteer programme, the expectation that all the



graduates would make such a transition was perhaps unrealistic, especially when their diverse personalities and cultural backgrounds were considered. Another factor that may have prevented some individuals from applying was that everyone who applied to be an official volunteer during the Games had to declare any criminal convictions. Given that almost all PVP graduates came from disadvantaged areas, with the educational and self-confidence deficits expected from such circumstances, there was a possibility that a higher proportion of graduates from these localities may have had criminal records than in other districts of the city. As Jones and Stokes (2003) point out, Manchester 2002 published no clear policy on the recruitment of volunteers with criminal records. Thus it is difficult to confirm if this was a constraint on PVP graduates with criminal records applying to become Games volunteers. However, to have 52 per cent of the PVP graduates from the A6 Corridor volunteering at the Commonwealth Games – people who almost certainly would not have been involved otherwise – should be viewed as a success.

Employability

Many of the PVP graduates were unemployed, and whilst it was hoped that individuals would seek paid positions as a result of completing the training, the proportion of PVP graduates looking for employment was low. This was partly because people feared that they would lose their benefit entitlements. From the A6 area three people attended a course at CIS, a large telesales employer in Manchester, and one applied for a job there. Two volunteers attended Adecco interviews; another two completed lifeguard training, one of who obtained a position at the aquatics centre as a result; and another graduate became a traffic warden. Whilst these may seem minor successes, especially since one aim of the Games was to initiate jobs in the region, they do represent something positive in the context of the area as a whole and the nature of the individuals concerned. Clearly this was a sensitive issue for the PVP central steering committee.

The legacy of PVP

By June 2002 the PVP in the A6 Corridor had exceeded the targets it had been set. While perhaps a small scheme in the wider context, the PVP was clearly important. Not only did it engage the residents of some of the most challenging parts of Manchester in a simple yet effective training programme aimed at making them better citizens, but it also left a legacy that led to additional funding. The PVP was extended to twenty-three areas, and its success aroused the interest of central government. In January 2003 a Post Games Volunteer programme was established for a twelve-month period within Manchester City Council's Games Legacy Team (Manchester 2002, 2002c). Overall it is evident that the PVP produced both tangible and intangible successes. However, the benefits of such initiatives are not all immediate; and the effectiveness of the present research is limited by the fact that it is a 'snapshot' case study and not a longitudinal investigation. The real benefits to the communities and the region will only develop over time. So what is PVP's legacy? Interestingly, Melbourne chose not to initiate a PVP scheme, and it is too early to know if New Delhi will do so in 2010. However, one of the central aims of the London 2012 Volunteer Strategy is to build on the Manchester model (London 2012, 2005).

Conclusion

The 2002 Commonwealth Games undoubtedly had a dramatic effect on Manchester. Without such schemes as the PVP, the legacy of the 'Friendly Games' would not have been so significant for the local community. As for the future, it should be remembered that community-based schemes addressing social exclusion are longitudinal, and for this reason a final judgement on the outcome of the PVP may never be possible. However, looking forward to the scheme to be used in London in 2012, it is perhaps worth asking whether mega sporting events are more exclusive than inclusive of the local communities among which they are staged, and whether the 'culture' of volunteering at mega sporting events is a barrier to local community involvement. These questions could perhaps form the focus of future research.

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