Making the most of London 2012 for children and young people

Introduction

The London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games offer local groups, organisations and children and young people across the country opportunities for sport, volunteering and creative and cultural activities. Although focusing on sport, the games are also seen as a major catalyst for cultural activities and education.

The vision is that the games themselves, and the preparation for them, will combine to create lasting change across the UK. This briefing, outlines the national, regional and local activities planned in the run-up to the London 2012 games and the legacy they aspire to. It also offers some ideas about how play providers can work with local partners to raise awareness and enthusiasm for the games.

The underlying themes of the full London 2012 programme are:

• the Olympic ideals of striving for excellence and doing one’s personal best, fair play and cultural understanding
• inclusion and encouraging positive views of disability
• celebration of diversity and strengthening communities
• encouragement of young people to make a positive contribution to the community, for example, through volunteering
• the creation of a long-term legacy across the UK and especially in the Legacy Park in east London.

London 2012 and children and young people

The London bid’s emphasis on children and young people was one of the reasons London was chosen to host the games. To make the best of this opportunity, the government intends to focus efforts on:

• boosting the interest and active participation of children and young people in both elite competitive sport and in community sport – contributing to more healthy lifestyles generally
• helping address young people’s under-achievement and disaffection
• better equipping young people for life in a global society by improving their language skills and understanding of other countries and cultures.

The education programme

Much of the focus of London 2012 is in the accompanying education programme, for schools and colleges across the UK, which aims to ‘spark young people’s imagination and enthusiasm for learning’.

This programme, to be launched in September 2008, will offer children and young people an opportunity to relate to the London 2012 games through sport, culture and education.

A network of schools and colleges and local authority education departments will link to London 2012 through lessons, out-of-school provision of sports and activities, and by involving members of the wider school community. An interactive website and theme-based resources will support this and provide information, resources, up-to-date news and films about the build-up to London 2012. Participating schools and colleges will also get access to other
learning resources through links to the London 2012 games, which will be based around themes including:

- citizenship
- healthy active living
- culture and creativity
- PE and sport
- internationalism
- sustainability and regeneration
- enterprise, and
- practical learning.

A resource pack, *On your Marks*, with fact sheets, news articles, an image bank and supporting teaching ideas is available for schools from the London 2012 website. A similar education pack has been established by the British Paralympic Association and can be found on the government's Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) website.

### 2012 Young Ambassadors Programme

The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), in conjunction with the Youth Sports Trust, have appointed nearly 900 young ambassadors between 14 - and 18 - years - old, selected from each of the 411 School Sport Partnerships across the country. Young ambassadors help spread the Olympic message and ideals within the School Sport Partnerships, and act as advocates and role models to other young people within the partnerships. Young ambassadors take on the role for two years. In their second year they can then become mentors to newly appointed ambassadors.

Half the young ambassadors are selected for their sporting ability and half for their commitment and ability as leaders and volunteers. Each School Sport Partnership selects one talented sportsperson and one leader or volunteer.

### UK School Games

Other activities for children and young people include the annual UK School Games and the government funded Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme for young athletes of 12 - to 19 - years old. These aim to bridge the gap between junior representative sport and world-class competition.

### The Cultural Olympiad

The games are not just about physical and sporting activity: they are also about culture, urban regeneration, and social cohesion. The Cultural Olympiad aims to inspire creativity and excellence across a range of performing arts and creative learning opportunities. It embraces the Olympic movement values of ‘excellence, respect and friendship’ and the Paralympic movement’s vision to ‘empower, achieve, inspire’. By involving young people across the UK, it is intended that there will be long-lasting benefits after the games with more young people participating in cultural and sports events and developing new skills.

The Cultural Olympiad links culture and sport; it will ‘bring public spaces to life’ with street theatre, public art, circus skills and live big-screen sites. It aims to raise discussion about environmental sustainability, health and well-being; to involve local communities and link with the education programme. The intention is that the Cultural Olympiad will create a new awareness of cultural activity around the UK: improving partnership working, developing new projects, and increasing the numbers of people taking part in cultural activities within their local community.

As part of the Cultural Olympiad, the UK Cultural Festival, happening over the four years leading up to the games, will include thousands of local and regional events. A network of creative programmers based in each region, will be supporting local and regional projects. There will be a special mark of endorsement awarded to exceptional projects that are likely to have a positive impact now and in the future.

A new Legacy Trust UK, with initial funding of £40 million, will support cultural, sporting and community projects around the UK reflecting the London 2012 vision. This money will be allocated in 2008 to projects covering community sport, healthy living, well-being, education, learning and personal development, creativity and community events and festivals.

### The involvement of regional agencies

To promote the potential benefits of hosting the London 2012 games, there is now a Nations and Regions Group (NRG) which includes representatives from the Local Government Association and each region. The group meets quarterly and provides leadership and strategic direction to maximise opportunities from the London 2012 games.
In England, each region has its own regional working structures, which include regional development agencies; sports, tourism and cultural bodies; local authorities; government offices; and business representation. Each region has a strategy for after the London 2012 games which typically includes activity around:

- economic development and regeneration
- sporting opportunities
- community engagement
- employment
- volunteering and skills development
- tourism
- cultural celebration.

Play England is represented in some of these regional groups and has been promoting opportunities for play development where possible.

**London and the 2012 games**

Plans for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games are firmly rooted in what the games can do for London, improving opportunities right across the capital as well as transforming one of the most deprived parts of the UK. Planning in London is trying to ensure that people, organisations and businesses from all of London’s communities have the opportunity to benefit from the games.

The main Olympic Park will be built in east London in an area which is currently made up of large areas of derelict industrial land and poor-quality housing. Hosting the games in this part of London will speed up the creation of a mixed-use, sustainable district, with new homes and strong transport links set within a large area of parkland. After the games, a major part of the site will be the Legacy Parklands, a large open green space for everyone to enjoy.

London 2012, the Greater London Authority and the London Development Agency are working closely with the five host boroughs - Hackney, Waltham Forest, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Greenwich - to ensure that Londoners and local businesses can make the most of the opportunities that the games offer. Central to this is making sure London's many diverse communities can make an active contribution to the London 2012 games.

**Play and the London 2012 site**

Working with CABE Space, the Play England - London office have secured agreement from the Olympic Development Authority (ODA) that 2012 must provide for children and young people's play opportunities, and that a play strategy for the Legacy Parklands will be developed as part of the Legacy Masterplan Framework. The idea is that:

- The Legacy Park will be the best free play park in Europe.
- The Legacy Park play areas will be carefully situated to provide an incentive for children and families living in the neighbouring communities, other London boroughs and visitors from outside the capital to visit and use the park.
- Children will be actively involved in the planning process.
- There will be safe routes to the park giving easy access from all surrounding boroughs.
- New housing developments will include local play opportunities in line with the Greater London Authority's Supplementary Planning Guidance on children’s play and informal recreation (GLA 2008).

**2012 events outside London**

In 2012, some of the events will take place outside London. The football tournament will be held in Glasgow, Cardiff, Newcastle, Manchester and Birmingham; the sailing will be in Weymouth, the rowing in Eton Dorney (west of London), the canoeing will be in Broxbourne (Hertfordshire) and mountain-biking in Weald Country Park (Essex). Also, around 600 pre-games training camps for different sports are being established across the UK. The guide to these locations is published in summer 2008.

**The implications for play providers**

In December 2007, the government placed the need for good play opportunities at the centre of planning and provision for children's well-being and happiness when it published its 10-year Children's Plan (DCSF 2007). In addition to a dedicated £235 million play programme, the plan commits the government to producing a cross-departmental play strategy. The consultation on this was published in Fair Play (DCSF 2008). Fair Play states that ‘Plans are being drawn up for the transformation of the Olympic Park including identification of opportunities for children's play space following completion of the games. The London Development Agency and Olympic Delivery Authority are working with CABE and Play.
England to prepare a strategy for play provision, which will inform work to develop and regenerate the park following the games. We will promote the need for this to include play opportunities by jointly supporting an event for Olympic planners and children’s services departments involved in the Olympics.’ (DCSF 2008: para 5.24)

Possible opportunities for local play services to get involved in projects connected to the games and the Cultural Olympiad include:
• linking in with local initiatives through schools, out-of-school provision and cultural activities
• checking with regional offices to find out about developing strategies and activities influencing local Cultural Strategies
• briefing members of local organising committees about the potential involvement of play providers
• linking with local sports and arts organisations to share ideas and skills
• promoting the importance of child-friendly public open spaces and opportunities for children and families to celebrate the opportunities that the games present.

References

Further information
London 2012
www.london2012.com
On Your Marks
Provides resources for schools to support teachers and support staff.
www.onyourmarks.london2012.com
Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS)
A government-funded programme that represents a partnership between sport and higher and further education.
www.tass.gov.uk
UK School Games
The UK School Games is a multi-sport event for the UK’s elite young athletes of school age.
www.ukschoolgames.com

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