

Westminster Learning & Employability Network

Developing an Olympics Volunteering Framework for Westminster

Creative Cultures
Perfect Moment

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Executive Summary

The importance of volunteering and 2012

This Olympics Volunteering Framework for Westminster has been commissioned from Creative Cultures by Westminster's Learning and Employability Network (LEN), one of the thematic groups of the wider Westminster City Partnership.

The aim of the study is to develop an action plan for volunteering, focusing on London 2012, and which seeks to enhance the skills and employability of local residents. It will feed into a broader volunteering strategy for the borough to be developed shortly.

For London, the 2012 Olympiad brings enormous opportunities, matched only by the scale of challenges in meeting the needs of the world's largest sporting and cultural event. The contribution of a large body of volunteers has rightly been acknowledged as a vital component of the success of the Sydney and Athens Games in particular. For 2012 the overall estimate of the numbers of volunteers required stands at 70,000.

Westminster's special position

Westminster is in a special position in relation to the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics:

- it will host some events in their entirety
- it can be expected to attract a high proportion of all visitors to the capital
- it is already involved in an internationally-renowned annual programme of large-scale events and activities and can be expected to play a substantive role in the Cultural Olympiad which begins in 2008
- its location means that some of its residents can be expected to be among those who might apply to be one of the volunteers required for the Olympics.

Westminster's Framework for volunteering in relation to the Olympics starts from a number of key factors:

- Westminster contains some of the most deprived wards in the country – Church Street, Queen's Park, Westbourne, Harrow Road and South Westminster
- The City Council supports a range of volunteering programmes in Westminster as part of its efforts to improve employability
- Through the **Local Area Agreement (LAA)** there is a target to support nearly 5,000 residents into volunteering opportunities, including those who are designated as 'hard to reach'
- The Westminster **One City** programme aims to encourage active citizenship and community cohesion, particularly through the promotion of volunteering.

Defining volunteering

Volunteering is defined by the National Volunteering Compact Code (1998) and this definition includes the following statement:

Volunteering is an important expression of citizenship and fundamental to democracy. It is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, and can take many forms. It is freely undertaken and not for financial gain. The principle of non-payment of volunteers is central to this Code and to the wider sector and society's understanding of volunteering.

Volunteering in Westminster

Westminster's voluntary sector includes more than 650 organisations providing services across the borough. The sector has a turnover of £198 million and employs 2,250 full time and 1,400 part time staff. It has also been estimated that 12,800 volunteers support the sector giving £23 million worth of time.

There are a significant number of volunteering programmes and projects and Westminster was one of the participating boroughs in the London Development Agency's Pre-Volunteering Programme. It has also established a Westminster City Guides pilot project which undertook work for the recent Tour de France opening event.

Volunteering for 2012

Over 130,000 people have already registered an interest on the website for 2012 volunteering. The recruitment of 'Games Time volunteers' for 2012 will be overseen by the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) whose volunteering strategy has yet to be published. It is likely however that:

- A target of 10% or more of total volunteers will be drawn from priority groups
- Volunteers will be drawn from across the UK
- London might set a minimum age of 15 (i.e. recruited at age 14)
- Recruitment is likely to be co-ordinated at regional level
- Recruitment might entail attendance for interviews, eg at selection camps
- Priority or disadvantaged groups applicants will be guaranteed an interview
- Quotas for particular priority groups or areas may or may not be set
- There will be close liaison with bodies like the Police, St John Ambulance Brigade etc to assist in identifying volunteering needs

Learning from other places

A review of the experience of other places hosting the Olympics or Commonwealth Games and of the initial steps being taken by other London boroughs closely involved with 2012 events has identified a number of lessons including:

- The limited numbers of Westminster residents, including from targeted groups, likely to achieve selection as Games Time volunteers
- The importance of being able to register and track the progress of those involved in pre-Games volunteering initiatives
- The need to design a programme for volunteering which goes beyond the Olympics itself and is clearly linked to Westminster's own objectives
- The need to link pre-volunteering activity to further training or job opportunities or to ongoing volunteer activity depending on the differing objectives of those involved
- The possibility of developing a core volunteer cadre including specialist skill groups which can assist Westminster based events and activities.

Challenges for Westminster volunteering for 2012

The challenges for Westminster LEN in determining a role for 2012 in volunteering include:

- Striving to ensure representation of all groups in the community among volunteers
- Recognising and accommodating the different reasons for volunteering by individuals
- Finding adequate means to reach those groups under-represented in volunteering for whatever reason

- Ensuring that partner organisations are co-ordinated and linked in to each other.

Volunteering needs to address a range of issues across the sectors involved including the capacity of the voluntary sector, the differing priorities of statutory bodies and the private sector. A successful volunteering policy for 2012 will require:

- An overall advisory group and a lead body able to co-ordinate activities
- Good management processes including communication and promotion
- Realistic resourcing and a view to achieving legacy and sustainability

The aims for a Westminster 2012 Volunteering Action Plan

The aims for Westminster 2012 volunteering should be to:

- raise the profile of events volunteering in Westminster
- strengthen current partnerships within the borough involved in volunteering and to seek wider resourcing
- extend the reach of volunteering to groups within the community who are under-represented among volunteers
- link with and support skills development programmes in the borough
- build a sustainable legacy for individual volunteers and the community through securing community benefits and individual benefits – especially in relation to employment
- ensure that Westminster residents are well represented as 2012 Games Time volunteers, with emphasis on participation from priority groups and areas within the borough.

There is also a need to manage expectations about opportunities for Westminster residents and 2012 Games time volunteering and also about the extent to which 2012 volunteering can be linked to increasing employment prospects.

Priority Target Groups

The target groups for the Olympics volunteering Action Plan should be those members of the Westminster community who are identified in the plans and initiatives of Westminster City Council and its partners as being at greatest disadvantage in social and economic terms in the borough. By demographic grouping they are:

Young people
People from black and ethnic minorities
Deaf and disabled people
People with mental health needs
Older people

By economic grouping:

Unemployed people

By area:

**Residents of the Local Areas for Church Street, Harrow Road,
Queen's Park, South Westminster, Westbourne and West End.**

Recommendations for action for 2012 volunteering

The recommendations for Westminster 2012 volunteering, set out in an Action Plan, are:

A. Organisation and Preparation

A1. Carry out a revision of the framework and action plan in the light of the final LOCOG Olympics Volunteering Strategy, the outcomes of the LDA PVP evaluation and the LDA research into the visitor economy related to 2012.

A2. Create a single co-ordinating body for Olympics volunteering
Westminster LEN and Westminster City Council should negotiate and agree the remit, terms and conditions for a single co-ordinating body for all aspects of Olympics volunteering in Westminster.

A3. Maximise Olympic volunteering opportunities for Westminster
Westminster, whether designated as an Olympic Borough or not, should work with other London boroughs, particularly those already designated as Olympics Boroughs, to lobby and negotiate for as favourable a position as possible in relation to PVP recruitment and Games Time volunteering.

A4 Launch and disseminate the framework and action plan
Once completed and approved, the framework and action plan should be launched by Westminster LEN and the key stakeholders, and made available to the public on WCC, voluntary sector and private sector websites.

B. Recruitment and Operation

B1. Deliver volunteer numbers in line with One City and LAA policy
The Council and its partners should set a target of at least 10% of volunteers recruited for Olympics-related volunteering within the borough to come from the identified target groups and areas.

B2. Ensure an inclusive approach to recruitment to achieve this target
The single co-ordinating body should establish a recruitment programme that works through existing organisations and projects which are directly involved in working with the target groups and which uses direct approaches and contact with them. .

B3. Integrate Olympic volunteers with a Westminster core group of volunteers drawing on the experience gained through the City Guides pilot and from Newham's experience to form a core group of volunteers into which those attracted to Olympic-related PVP and other programmes can be integrated and involved in events management and other activities within the borough.

B4. Target the core volunteer group for employment and post-volunteering opportunities to be used to bring together those from the target groups and older and other non-target groups. It should integrate those with and those without skills, those with and without work, draw on professional expertise, form a structure of specialist teams and team leaders, develop a 'crew' attitude of mutual support, wear distinctive clothing, be widely promoted and acknowledge and celebrate the volunteers' contribution. This will help secure the individual benefits for those from priority groups.

B5. Focus on training useful to both Olympics and borough opportunities accreditation is a core Games Time requirement and should also focus on the needs within Westminster which might include customer service and hospitality training, for example, with potential to assist employability with retail, catering, hotel, tourism and cultural sectors.

C Securing Legacy

C1. Establish an effective data-handling and tracking system for volunteering which can help secure legacy and provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of Olympic volunteering initiatives (and the wider Volunteering initiatives).

C2. Target Olympics and other volunteers seeking employment skills

The core group of volunteers and specific Pre-Volunteering Programmes to which Westminster target groups might be recruited, should also be used to target volunteers with information and support for work-placement and training opportunities. This should build on the confidence and interest that will be generated through the volunteering experience.

C3. Work with cultural organisations and the private sector to create other opportunities

The single co-ordinating body should seek to engage with Westminster's many major cultural institutions, particularly those involved in Cultural Olympiad activities. It should aim to identify and offer further volunteering opportunities, particularly to those recruited from the target groups, as well as the development of work-placement, mentoring or other schemes. This approach could also be used with major employers in the entertainment, retail and hotel sectors and link with existing initiatives by some of these employers.

C4 Ensure that outputs and outcomes related to Westminster Olympics volunteering are captured by the single co-ordinating body which should seek to obtain both hard and soft data on the results of activities relating to the Olympics Volunteering Framework, up to, during and at the conclusion of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

