



# Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games clyde-sider study: a synthesis of the learning

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## **Executive summary**

This report summarises and synthesises key findings from a study of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games clyde-sider volunteering programme, drawing on key learning from three surveys and qualitative research . The study was designed to gather learning on the expectations, experiences and long-term impacts of volunteering on applicants, capturing the views of both those who were selected and those who were not successful with their application (referred to throughout as non-clyde-siders). Key findings are:

### ***Who applied and why?***

- The clyde-sider volunteer programme attracted applications from people of all ages throughout the UK. More women applied than men and most applicants were well educated and already involved in volunteering.
- Most applied for the experiential benefits of being a volunteer or to use their existing skills, rather than to develop new skills or for their own personal development. Developing new skills was a more important motivation for young volunteers.
- Gender, age and area were important factors in shaping the expectations, experiences and outcomes of volunteers and volunteer applicants.

### ***Experience of being volunteer / an applicant***

- Involvement in the programme was rewarding for most, providing a unique and social experience. This had a positive lasting impression on many participants.
- For those not selected, reports of dissatisfaction with the recruitment process highlight the importance of transparency and regular communication from Games organisers.
- Being a clyde-sider incurred costs before and during the Games. Cost was most likely to be a consideration for women and young people when deciding whether or not to apply.
- The clyde-sider experience was described as one that made people proud or grateful to have been part of a unique event. Positive comments were also given about the role that Glasgow played in delivering the Games and the wish to continue volunteering in the future.
- Suggestions on how to improve the volunteering experience were offered on the training, making shifts more flexible, role assignment and support to find accommodation and transport.

- Clyde-siders described feeling proud or grateful to have been part of a unique event, with positive comments made about the city of Glasgow and the wish to continue volunteering in the future. Suggestions on how to improve the volunteering experience were offered on the training, making shifts more flexible, role assignment and support to find accommodation and transport.

### ***Subsequent volunteering***

- Positive outcomes in relation to volunteering frequency two years after the Games (i.e. volunteering once a week or more) were more common in clyde-siders than non-clyde-siders, men rather than women, younger applicants and respondents from outwith Glasgow.
- Not being selected did not result in a decrease in future volunteering, although many chose to do local forms of volunteering instead of applying to other big-event programmes.
- Increased future volunteering rates did not result in a significant increase in volunteering uptake across the population as most were already involved in volunteering.

### ***Wider impacts***

- Most clyde-siders felt that the Games had been positive for Glasgow and Scotland, particularly in relation to the atmosphere, the cultural transformation and the sense of togetherness throughout the city.
- Positive findings on the wider benefits were supported by the qualitative research, which found that the Games provided a platform for Glasgow to showcase its qualities to the rest of the world.

Recommendations are offered in relation to how future mega-event volunteering programmes can be designed and delivered in the interests of inclusivity and diversity, as well as for how mega-event volunteering programmes can be used to support the legacy aim of increasing volunteering within the general population.

## 1. Background and methodology

### 1.1 Study objectives

Around 12,500 applicants were appointed to participate in the clyde-sider volunteering programme. Between 2014 and 2016, the GCPH undertook quantitative and qualitative research to generate learning on the delivery and short-term impacts of this programme. A study was designed to meet the following objectives:

- To generate learning on the expectations, experiences and long-term impacts of volunteering as a clyde-sider at the Games.
- To generate learning on the experience and long-term outcomes of those who applied but were not successful in their application to become a clyde-sider.
- To understand the impact of mega-event volunteering on long-term volunteering outcomes in the wider population.
- To generate learning that could shape future volunteering practice in Glasgow and beyond, both at mega-events and through local forms of volunteering.

### 1.2 Summary of study components

The following study reports<sup>1-4</sup> contributed to the findings in this briefing paper:

- **Baseline survey** – issued to applicants before they had been made aware of whether or not they had been selected to be a clyde-sider. This included questions relating to pre-Games expectations and past volunteering experience.
- **First follow-up survey** – issued to applicants (clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders) who completed the baseline four months after the Games. The questionnaire included questions on the experience of the application process (all applicants), experiences of volunteering at the Games (clyde-siders only) and subsequent volunteering behaviour (all applicants).
- **Second follow-up** – issued to applicants (clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders) who completed the baseline and first follow-up surveys two years after the Games. Four themes relating to legacy outcomes from the programme were reported on: ‘skills developed and used since the Games’; ‘volunteering since the Games’; ‘social connections’; and ‘personal legacy’.

- **Qualitative research** – undertaken by Leeds Beckett University of a sample of clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders who completed the baseline, which included a review of existing literature on the impacts of mega-sporting event volunteering and a qualitative exploration of the experiences of clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders.

Table 1 provides an overview of each research component, including the number of responses and the response rate, when data was captured and the thematic focus of each report.

**Table 1. Summary of study components.**

<b>Study component</b>	<b>Number of responses (response rate)</b>	<b>Data capture</b>	<b>Thematic focus</b>
Baseline survey  (clyde-sider applicants)	7,722 (15%)	September – December 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reasons for applying</li> <li>- Expected impact of the Games</li> <li>- Current and past volunteering</li> <li>- Anticipated gains</li> <li>- Skills hoped to develop</li> </ul>
1st follow-up survey  (clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders)	2,718 (50%)	November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The application process</li> <li>- Experience of the Games</li> <li>- Volunteering costs</li> <li>- Gains through volunteering</li> <li>- Skills developed</li> <li>- Volunteering since the Games</li> </ul>
2nd follow up survey  (clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders)	1,525 (56%)	July 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Skills used since the Games</li> <li>- Volunteering since the Games</li> <li>- Social connections</li> <li>- Personal legacy</li> </ul>
Qualitative study  (clyde-siders (35) and non-clyde-siders (6))	41	July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Summary of mega-event volunteering literature</li> <li>- The volunteer journey</li> <li>- Individual outcomes for clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders</li> <li>- Wider impacts.</li> </ul>

### **1.3 Study design and methods**

Questionnaires for each survey were designed with input from the Scottish Government, Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Life and Volunteer Scotland. Surveys included closed and open-ended questions, with some repeat questions included to enable comparisons to be made at different time points. This synthesis is based on descriptive statistics using both frequencies and cross-tabulations. Thematic analysis was used for both the open-ended questions in the surveys and in the qualitative research.

All applicants were invited to participate in the baseline study, with data collected during the autumn of 2013. This questionnaire achieved 7,722 unique responses from over 50,000 applicants, providing a response rate of 15%. For the first follow-up, respondents were recruited by email from those who completed the baseline survey and were willing to be contacted about further research (5,440 of 7,722 baseline survey respondents). The survey was issued to applicants in November 2014; four months after the Games took place. In total, 2,718 people completed the follow-up survey, achieving a 50% response rate. Data was captured for the second follow-up in summer 2016. This survey received 1,525 responses from the participants who had completed the first follow-up, achieving a 56% response rate.

The qualitative element of the study was undertaken by Leeds Beckett University. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were undertaken with clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders. The sampling frame covered applicants who completed the pre-Games baseline questionnaire and post-Games follow-up questionnaire, and who agreed to be contacted about further research. Purposive sampling techniques were employed to capture the diversity of applicants. Three cities within Central Scotland (Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling) were selected to host 11 focus group discussions (seven group discussions with clyde-siders and four with non-clyde-siders). Eleven individual interviews were also conducted with clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders.

## **2. Mega-event volunteering: What does the literature tell us?**

Leeds Beckett University were commissioned to undertake a literature review on the process and impacts of participation in mega-event volunteering at sporting events. The review covered factors relating to the profile of volunteers and the experience of applying and taking part in a mega-sporting event. Fifty-six publications were identified from the literature review, drawing on research from a range of mega-sporting events, but most commonly from the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth Games.

### ***Profile of volunteer applicants***

Past studies have shown no consistent pattern with regard to the age, gender and previous volunteering experience at mega-sporting events. However, applicants are more likely to be in full time education or employment, and up to two-thirds may have attained a bachelor's degree. Mega-sporting event volunteering is not always ethnically inclusive, with past events showing an under-representation of some ethnic minority groups. People with disabilities may also face barriers to participation, even when extra training and support is provided.

### ***Recruitment, the application process and training***

Event organisers can aid the recruitment process by working in partnership with local organisations and networks. A strong retention policy, in which applicants are contacted regularly, can help to keep volunteers engaged and positive during this long process. Training is an important part of the volunteering process. Role-specific training is vital for inexperienced volunteers, whereas experienced volunteers may view some aspects of training as unnecessary. Findings from past events have shown that a good relationship between volunteers and event organisers, including paid staff, can be important for ensuring a positive experience for volunteers.

### ***Individual impacts of volunteering at mega-sporting events***

Evidence suggests that mega-sporting event volunteering can positively impact mental health and wellbeing, provide opportunities for skills development and broaden social networks. There is, however, limited evidence that mega-sporting event volunteering enhances employability. Past studies have shown that involvement can increase people's intention to volunteer or to be more physically active afterwards. However, there is little evidence on whether such intentions are backed up by actual increases for either activity.

### ***Evidence gaps***

Past research shows that the process of mega-sporting event volunteering is relatively well understood. However, gaps remain regarding the impact of mega-sporting volunteering on individuals and communities, while few studies have tracked outcomes for applicants who applied but were not selected.

### 3. Demographic profile of survey respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of respondents across the three surveys<sup>a</sup>. Where possible, the demographic characteristics of survey respondents are compared with the characteristics of 'most applicants' (the 87% of applicants who agreed to share their personal details with Volunteer Scotland). Comparisons reveal that the demographic makeup of respondents is broadly similar across all three surveys. Younger applicants were more likely to drop out after the first survey, as were the non-clyde-siders. Those most likely to complete all three surveys were married or in a civil partnership and had attained a first degree or higher. Compared with 'most applicants', survey respondents were more likely to be clyde-siders, to live outwith Glasgow and be older.

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<sup>a</sup> Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding or multiple responses

**Table 1. Demographic profile of survey respondents.**

<b>Demographic variable</b>	<b>Baseline (n=7,722)</b>	<b>1st follow-up (n=2,718)</b>	<b>2nd follow-up (n=1,525)</b>	<b>Most apps (n=44,174)</b>
<b>Clyde-sider volunteer</b>				
Yes	-	67%	78%	29%
No	-	33%	22%	71%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	37%	38%	39%	38%
Female	63%	62%	61%	62%
<b>Area of residence</b>				
Glasgow	13%	13%	13%	26%
Rest of Scotland	53%	54%	56%	42%
Rest of UK	32%	31%	30%	30%
Not in UK	2%	2%	1%	2%
<b>Age</b>				
16-24	15%	7%	4%	34%
25-44	24%	20%	17%	28%
45-64	47%	57%	61%	30%
65+	13%	17%	18%	8%
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married/civil partnership	58%	64%	66%	-
Single/never married	31%	22%	20%	-
Divorced/widowed/separated	11%	14%	15%	-
<b>Sexual orientation</b>				
Heterosexual/straight	94%	96%	96%	-
Gay or lesbian	3%	3%	2%	-
Bisexual	1%	1%	1%	-
Other	<1%	<1%	1%	-
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
White	95%	97%	97%	-
Asian/Asian British	1%	1%	1%	-
Mixed	2%	<1%	>1%	-
Black/Black British	1%	<1%	1%	-
Other	1%	<1%	1%	-
<b>Employment status</b>				
Full time	43%	41%	40%	-
Part time/casual employment	17%	18%	17%	-
Retired/pensioner	23%	31%	35%	-
Full-time student	11%	6%	4%	-
Unemployed/seeking employment	3%	3%	5%	-
Other	4%	1%	-	-
<b>Educational status</b>				
Some, but less than a 1st degree	42%	35%	32%	-
1st degree or higher	58%	65%	68%	-
<b>Long-term illness/condition</b>				
Yes	6%	7%	8%	-
<b>Those who said yes</b>				
Physical disability	27%	32%	36%	-
Mental/emotional health problem	11%	12%	14%	-
Long-term illness	33%	33%	42%	-
Don't know	5%	2%	2%	-
Other	24%	21%	20%	-

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Baseline survey

The baseline survey, issued a year prior to the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games, gathered information on motivations, experience and expectations of the Games. Key findings are summarised under the following headings: 'reason for applying'; 'current and past volunteering'; the 'expected impact of the Games'; anticipated gains'; and 'skills development'.

#### *Reason for applying*

- The most common motivations for applying to become a clyde-sider were the excitement of being part of the Games (89%), to use existing skills (61%) and to make a positive difference to the community (52%). Personal development (44%) and skills for employment (24%) were less common motivations, but were important to many younger volunteers.
- The most common ways in which people heard about the opportunity to volunteer were through the Glasgow 2014 website (57%), word of mouth (36%), TV (27%) and newspapers (23%).

#### *Current and past volunteering*

- In the 12 months before applying 83% of respondents volunteered formally (e.g. helping organisations in an unpaid capacity) and 74% volunteered informally (e.g. giving up time to help a neighbour).
- Of those who had volunteered formally in the 12 months prior to applying, 74% did so at least once a month, and 61% had volunteered for over five hours in the previous month.
- Of those who had volunteered informally in the past 12 months, 56% did so at least once a month, and 28% had spent over five hours doing so in the previous month.
- Of those who had stopped volunteering in the 12 months prior to applying, reasons given were primarily related to time constraints or changing circumstances (e.g. employment, moving house, having children or care responsibilities).
- Many applicants had previous links to sport volunteering: 35% had volunteered in a sporting capacity in the past 12 months and 26% had volunteered at the London 2012 Olympics.

### ***Expected impact of the Games***

- Most volunteer applicants expected the Games to have a positive impact on Scotland (96%) and almost all expected it to have a positive impact on Glasgow (99%).

### ***Anticipated gains through participation***

Survey participants were asked to list up to three things that they hoped to gain from the Games. While a range of responses were given, most related to being part of a unique experience, gains relating to personal development, the opportunity to represent the city and give something back, and finally, for the social benefits that they hoped it could bring.

### ***Skills development***

Applicants were also asked to list up to three skills that they hoped to develop through participation in the Games. Skills relating to personal traits or characteristics such as confidence or self-esteem were commonly listed, as were generic or transferable skills such as communication, teamwork and leadership. Knowledge- or experience-dependent skills were also mentioned, including those relating to a particular sport represented at the Games or profession (e.g. events management). Lastly, task-specific skills were mentioned such as first aid, driving and language skills.

## **4.2. First follow-up survey**

A follow-up survey was issued to volunteer applicants in November 2014 to explore experiences of the application process, involvement in the Games and expected impacts. Following completion of the Games, responses were captured and analysed by volunteer status (i.e. for both clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders).

### **4.2.1. Non-clyde-sider experiences**

#### ***Experiences of the application process***

- The main reason for not becoming a clyde-sider was not being selected at the interview or the application stage (63%). Some respondents withdrew their application or declined the offer to become a volunteer (21%) and a small number chose not to volunteer because of the associated costs (4%).
- Non-clyde-siders were more likely to express dissatisfaction (46%) than satisfaction (29%) with the application process. Open-ended responses show that poor communication, the time taken to process the application, the IT system and the interview process were the main reasons for being dissatisfied. Some respondents commented that the process had not allowed them to adequately outline their skills, while others felt that applicants from certain geographical areas were given preference.

#### ***Experience of the Games***

- Most non-clyde-siders experienced the Games or contributed to it in some capacity, either by watching it on TV (75%), attending events (50%) or by spending time in Glasgow while the Games were on (35%). Only 7% indicated that they had not experienced the Games in any way.

### **4.2.2. Clyde-sider experiences**

#### ***Clyde-sider role***

- Clyde-siders volunteered for a number of different functional areas, with the most common being specific sports events (29%), spectator services (20%), transport services (10%) and Commonwealth Games Associations relations (8%).
- The total number of volunteer shifts ranged from 8 to 21+, with most lasting between 6 to 10 hours (86%).

- 46% of clyde-siders spent time away from home to volunteer, with most who did spending more than seven nights away from home (78%).

### ***Volunteering costs***

- 69% of clyde-siders spent at least £50, and 32% spent over £250 during the Games. Younger clyde-siders (16-24) were more likely to have incurred some costs during this time than older volunteers (25+).
- 23% of clyde-siders stated that the cost of volunteering was important to their decision about whether or not to apply to become a volunteer. Cost was more likely to be important to women and younger volunteers (16-24).
- Most respondents (87%) were aware that financial support was available to them through the Volunteer Support Pot. This fund was widely regarded as a good idea, enabling people to volunteer who may not have otherwise been in a financial position to do so. Some negative comments were made about the amount awarded, the eligibility criteria and not being aware of the fund until after it was too late to apply.

### ***Gains experienced through volunteering***

- Clyde-siders most commonly gained from their experience of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games through the 'satisfaction of helping others enjoy themselves' (91%), the 'enjoyment of participating in a unique experience' (90%) by 'meeting new people' (82%), 'being part of a team' (81%) and having a 'sense of giving something back' (81%). In their own words, respondents reported gaining from the experience through increased confidence and renewed purpose. Additional gains were also reported in terms of the role that Glasgow played in shaping the experience and through contact with people from different cultures.

### ***Developing new skills or building on existing skills***

- Most respondents (70% or more) indicated that they had been able to develop a range of new skills as part of the clyde-sider volunteering experience, even if only to a small extent.
- The most common skills developed were transferable (e.g. communication, listening, teamwork and problem solving), followed by task-specific skills relating to their particular role and skills relating to personal development.

- Some respondents said that the experience had not enabled them to develop new skills, either because the role was not demanding or because there were too many volunteers for the tasks that needed to be completed.
- Young clyde-siders were most likely to report developing skills.

### ***Feelings about the clyde-sider experience***

- Most clyde-siders were positive or very positive about their experience (94%). High levels of satisfaction were reported in relation to how the Organising Committee handled the application (86%) and interview process (90%), as well as the assignment of roles (84%). The majority of respondents were also satisfied with the Organising Committee's role in recognising and rewarding input (73%), shift allocations (75%) and the match between skills and the assigned role (74%). Lower levels of satisfaction were reported in relation to transport provision (55%).
- Younger applicants (16-24) were more likely to be satisfied with how the Organising Committee handled these aspects of the volunteer experience.
- Open-ended responses collected on the overall clyde-sider experience provoked a range of responses, including being proud or grateful to have been part of a unique event, positive comments about the city of Glasgow and the wish to continue volunteering in the future.
- Suggestions on how to improve the volunteering experience were offered on the training, making shifts more flexible, role assignment and support to find accommodation and transport.

### **4.2.3. Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games legacy**

Both clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders were asked about their subsequent volunteering and their perception of the impact of the Games on Glasgow and Scotland.

#### ***Volunteering legacy***

- 85% of respondents reported that they had spent time volunteering in a formal capacity since the Games. Rates were higher for clyde-siders (87%) than non-clyde-siders (81%).
- Clyde-siders expected to do more formal (45%) and informal (32%) volunteering than they did before becoming a volunteer at the Games. Fewer non-clyde-siders expected to do more formal (18%) or informal (17%) volunteering, having applied.

- Non-clyde-siders aged 16-24 (66%) were more likely to expect to do more formal or informal volunteering in the future than older applicants (50% aged 25-44, 45% aged 45-64 and 31% aged 65+).
- Non-clyde-siders from Glasgow were more likely to expect to do more (22%) volunteering than those from the rest of Scotland (14%) or the rest of the UK (10%).
- Less than a fifth (19%) of the sample had registered for a 'My Volunteer Account' – an online portal displaying upcoming volunteering opportunities throughout Scotland. For over a quarter of respondents (27%), this was due to not being aware that the service was available.

### ***A Games legacy for Glasgow and Scotland***

- Most respondents felt that the Games had a positive impact on both Glasgow (93%) and Scotland (92%). The percentage expecting positive impacts over the next two years was slightly lower (84% for Glasgow and 78% for Scotland). Very few respondents expected a negative impact.

### **4.3. Second follow-up survey**

A second follow-up survey was issued to clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders two years after the Games. Four key legacy outcomes were explored: 'skills used since the Games'; 'volunteering since the Games'; 'social connections'; and 'personal reflections'.

#### **Skills used since the Games**

- More than a third of clyde-siders (between 35% and 40%) developed 'communication', 'leadership', 'teamwork', 'organisational', 'listening' or 'time management' skills during the Games. The rest felt that they already had these skills or did not develop them.
- Young and male volunteers from outwith Glasgow were most likely to have developed and used skills subsequently.
- Glasgow-based volunteers were 10% less likely than volunteers from elsewhere to have subsequently used 'communication', 'leadership', 'organisational', 'problem solving' or 'time management' skills.
- Open-ended comments on skills used mirrored some of those already expressed through closed question responses (e.g. communication and teamwork), as well as new responses relating to skills or traits such as leadership, patience, understanding and increased confidence.
- Some clyde-siders commented that they had been able to put skills into practice at work or had used the experience as an example when applying for work.

#### **Volunteering since the Games**

- 94% of respondents had volunteered in some capacity since the Games.
- Most respondents (clyde-sider and non-clyde-siders) did the 'same amount' or 'more volunteering' (formal or informal) in the two years that followed the Games.
- 40% applied for other mega-event volunteering posts after the Games. Those who did not cited a 'lack of time/other commitments', a 'lack of opportunities', being 'put off by past experiences' and 'prioritising local volunteering'.
- 80% of applicants were successful with subsequent mega-event volunteering applications.
- 35% of clyde-siders and 25% of non-clyde-siders felt that the number of volunteering roles in their area had increased since the Games.

- Positive outcomes in relation to volunteering frequency two years after the Games (i.e. volunteering once a week or more) were more common in clyde-siders than non-clyde-siders, men rather than women, younger applicants and respondents from outwith Glasgow.

### **Social connections**

- Clyde-siders (64%) were more likely than non-clyde-siders (18%) to have kept in touch with at least one person that they met through volunteering/applying to become a volunteer.
- Less than half of clyde-siders who kept in contact with people did so through face-to-face contact. Social media was the most common way of keeping in contact.
- Young volunteers (16-24) were the most likely age group to have kept in contact with people that they met and were more likely to do so through social media. Meeting up face-to-face, meanwhile, was more common in older volunteers.

### **Personal reflections**

- 97% of clyde-siders said that the experience of being a volunteer at the Games was at least 'slightly important' to their life.
- When considering the costs involved, 83% of clyde-siders would recommend mega-event volunteering to others.
- Enduring memories of the Games for clyde-siders commonly fell within the following headings: 'a social experience'; 'a sense of togetherness'; 'a feel good factor/a buzz'; 'fortunate to be part of it'; 'a cultural transformation'; and 'Glasgow's people'.
- Comments on the effects of being a clyde-sider were predominantly positive, reported through increased confidence and self-esteem, having a more positive perspective on life, having memories to look back on, through being more tolerant and understanding, through continued or increased volunteering and through being proud.
- Feelings of pride were also expressed by non-clyde-siders, although some commented that the experience of not being selected had put them off applying for future big events.

#### **4.4. Qualitative research**

Staff from the Centre for Health Promotion at Leeds Beckett University undertook a qualitative study to further investigate the experiences of clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders at the Games. This research covered both the process of involvement and its perceived outcomes.

##### **The volunteer journey**

- The notion of a 'volunteer journey' was applicable to clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders. Both suggested that the rare opportunity to participate in a unique and prestigious event was a motivating factor to apply for a clyde-sider role. Others were inspired by watching the London 2012 Olympics and the central role that volunteers (known as 'Games Makers') played at this event.
- Experiences of the application and interview process varied. While several participants suggested that the experience was efficient, friendly and helpful, others reported a long, drawn-out process. Some non-clyde-siders felt unclear about why they had not been selected.
- Clyde-sider roles varied considerably, ranging from spectator service positions to roles that were more 'behind the scenes' or 'logistics' based. Most felt well-equipped and trained to fulfil their role. Three assets/skill types were described as being important to the clyde-sider role; transferrable skills from a relevant professional background, a personal touch and an understanding of the local area and context. This was said to have given volunteers from Glasgow and the surrounding areas an important advantage.

##### **Individual outcomes for clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders**

- Clyde-siders described the immediate growth of their social networks as a result of having been a volunteer. This involved connecting with people from different social and cultural backgrounds. However, not all volunteer roles were said to be conducive to the development of friendships.
- For some clyde-siders, volunteering at the Games changed their outlook and perspective, giving them confidence to try new things.
- Unemployed volunteers and those in education suggested that the experience of participating at the Games would be beneficial to their future employment prospects by providing skills that could be used in future positions.

- Being involved in the Games (either as a clyde-sider or non-clyde-sider) generally led to continued or increased participation in volunteering. Some expressed an interest in volunteering at another mega-sporting event, although many acknowledged that the costs of doing so would be prohibitive. While very few non-clyde-siders were deterred from volunteering in general, some expressed their intention to avoid mega-event volunteering and to focus on local volunteering instead.

### **Wider social outcomes**

- Clyde-siders were said to have played an important role in showcasing Glasgow to a global audience. Some argued that this had helped to improve the city's image and reverse negative stereotypes.
- Participating as a volunteer was reported to have provided a 'feel good' factor among volunteers and more widely within the city. Non-clyde-siders also reported a sense of excitement and euphoria during the application and interview process.
- Increased social networks and social cohesion were dominant themes for clyde-siders and non-clyde-siders. This builds on findings from other research on the potential for mega-event volunteering to support the development of social capital.
- Place, participation and the social impacts were important linked themes in relation to people's experience of the Games. For clyde-siders, benefits were derived from the formal volunteering role and from being part of the collective experience in the city during the Games.

## **5. Discussion**

### ***Demographic profile of volunteer applicants***

The demographic profile of applicants shows that more women applied than men. This is in keeping with the gender difference in volunteering at a national level. By age, despite a slight under-representation of over-65s, the varied distribution shows that the programme had a wide appeal. The geographical spread of applications, meanwhile, suggests that the Games had a UK-wide appeal, benefiting from what was perceived to be a successful volunteering programme at the Olympic Games in London two years previously. Overall, clyde-sider applicants were typically well educated, not seeking work (either by being employed, retired or a student) and were already actively involved in volunteering. Previous research on mega-event volunteering shows that the proportion of volunteers educated to a degree level does tend to be higher than the general population<sup>3</sup>, although not to the extent seen by clyde-sider applicants. These volunteer characteristics are likely to increase the chances of ensuring a well-run event (as was the case at Glasgow 2014), but will have implications for the extent to which a positive volunteering legacy (i.e. increased volunteering rates across the population) is likely to result from the programme.

### ***Volunteer motivations and expectations***

In keeping with past research on mega-event volunteering<sup>3</sup>, clyde-sider applicants were principally motivated to volunteer for the experiential benefits of participation. Personal development and community-oriented reasons were important to fewer applicants. Further, using skills was a more important motivation than developing them, particularly for older volunteers. This suggests that a large proportion of the applicant population were looking to support the Games and experience it, rather than to gain from it in more tangible ways.

### ***Quality of the volunteering experience***

This study shows that the clyde-sider volunteer programme was rewarding for most, providing a unique and social experience. Support to find accommodation and the provision of transport were aspects of the organiser's role where improvements were suggested. For those not selected, difficulties relating to recruitment indicate the importance of good communication between organisers and volunteer applicants throughout the process. Findings from the study also suggest that it may have been beneficial to provide more clarity around why/whether local applicants were more likely to be selected than those from further afield. In addition, although difficult to ensure parity due to the scale of the

recruitment task, ensuring regular communication and providing feedback to those not selected may have gone some way to appease some unsuccessful applicants.

The costs associated with being a clyde-sider tended to be high, and almost a quarter expressed that cost was an important factor in their decision about whether or not to apply. This was particularly important for young volunteers and women. Although financial support was available and most clyde-siders said that the experience was worth it despite the costs involved, these findings reinforce the importance of providing financial assistance to volunteers on low incomes.

### ***Volunteering behaviour***

This study highlights two factors in relation to the volunteering behaviour of mega-sporting event applicants. First, that applicants are likely to already be actively involved in volunteering, and second, that the experience of volunteering at a mega-sporting event, or of applying to be a volunteer, can have a positive impact on subsequent volunteering. Positive impacts were more evident in younger volunteers, suggesting that they should be a key target group if the ambition is to increase volunteering rates in the population. In addition, by recruiting people who are not currently volunteering or do not have past experience, the potential for population-level benefits would increase. This highlights an important but perhaps inevitable tension between providing a well-run event with experienced volunteers and ensuring a volunteering legacy for the host city by recruiting volunteers hoping to build their skillset.

### ***Social connections***

Socialising was an important motivation for many applicants and was a commonly expressed gain by clyde-siders. Indeed, clyde-siders were more likely to have kept in touch with other volunteers they met than Games-Makers were at the 2012 Olympic Games in London<sup>5</sup>. Age was an important factor in how volunteers kept in touch with one another, with younger volunteers being more likely to keep in touch through social media, and older volunteers being more likely to meet in person. The social aspect of volunteering was also found to be important at a wider societal level, with the Games helping to create a positive and supportive atmosphere in the city. The Games was said by some to have fostered more sociable conditions throughout the city, built on shared values and a collective will to deliver a successful event in the city, and clyde-siders were said to have contributed to these

conditions. Harnessing this collective spirit beyond an event, however, is a challenge for Games organisers.

### ***Skills development***

The opportunity to use existing skills at the Games or to pass them on to others was an important motivation for experienced volunteer applicants. For younger applicants, meanwhile, developing new skills was a more important factor. Skills were not always valued for vocational purposes; developing life-skills or having a positive experience was more important to some than developing a particular skillset. Feedback indicating that certain roles were not demanding raises questions of whether mega-event volunteer programmes can provide the right conditions for all volunteers to develop skills, as well as whether skilled and experienced volunteers are needed for non-specialist roles. This suggests that there may have been an opportunity to recruit more people with no previous volunteering experience or those not currently in employment.

### ***Personal impacts***

Most Clyde-siders enjoyed a positive and rewarding experience that they can now look back on with pride and satisfaction. Beyond simply having a positive experience, many were impacted in a way that they considered important in their life. In addition, many volunteers valued the memories gained from the experience. Having positive memories based on rich life experiences provided material that could be relayed to others through storytelling.

### ***Wider impacts***

Prior to the Games most applicants expected that the event would be positive for both Glasgow (99%) and Scotland (96%). This expectation was largely backed up by results from the first follow-up survey, where 93% of respondents felt that the Games had been positive for Glasgow and 92% for Scotland. Open-ended comments on the experience of being a volunteer point to further societal benefits, particularly in relation to the atmosphere, the cultural transformation and the sense of togetherness that enveloped the city. These findings were supported by the qualitative research, which found that the Games provided a platform for Glasgow to showcase its qualities to the rest of the world.

### ***The impact of gender, age and area***

Gender, age and area were important factors in shaping the expectations, experiences and outcomes of volunteers and volunteer applications. In particular, age was an important

determinant of how the Games were experienced, with younger applicants tending to report better outcomes after participating as a clyde-sider (e.g. by using skills, volunteering after the Games and keeping in contact with people afterwards). For older volunteers, open-ended comments show that newly retired volunteers used the Games to transition into a new phase in their life. For some, the experience provided confirmation that volunteering after the Games would be a rewarding use of their time. With population projections indicating a substantial growth in over-60s, more flexible forms of employment and voluntary work are likely to assume greater importance in meeting economic and societal needs.

Being from Glasgow also had an important influence on a number of outcomes. Some of these were positive, such as feeling that the number of volunteering roles had increased in the local area and remaining in contact with people through face-to-face contact. However, for other factors, Glasgow-based volunteers were less likely to exhibit positive behaviours, including the subsequent use of skills, volunteering at least once a week afterwards and applying for other 'mega-event' volunteering positions. These findings bear significance given that volunteering rates in Glasgow remain below the national average, although it is worth noting that the characteristics of Glasgow-based volunteers may be different to those from elsewhere. For example, volunteers from outwith Glasgow are perhaps more likely to have been recruited for their specialist experience in volunteering roles, whereas Glasgow-based volunteers may have applied to take advantage of a local opportunity.

Differences by gender were less pronounced than they were for age or area of residence, although generally, volunteering outcomes were more positive in men than women. Men were more likely to have used skills subsequently, to volunteer more than once a week and to be involved in sport-related volunteering. Another gender difference was that women were more likely to keep in touch with others through social media.

### **The experience of not being selected**

Despite lower levels of satisfaction with the application process, volunteering rates among non-clyde-siders remained high after not being selected. However, there was a shift away from mega-event volunteering towards more local forms of participation. To support continued involvement in mega-event volunteering, greater transparency and more regular communication from Games organisers are important. Challenges here are perhaps inevitable given the need to recruit volunteers from a large pool of applicants within a relatively short space of time.

## **6. Recommendations and conclusions**

Findings from this study show that the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Clyde-Sider volunteer programme was well delivered and can be held up as successful model for future mega-event volunteering programmes. Recommendations for policy and practice include aspects of the programme that worked well and should be replicated, as well as suggestions for how future volunteering programmes might be delivered differently in the interests of inclusivity, diversity and delivering long-term societal benefits.

### **Promotion of future mega-event volunteering programmes**

- Findings show that volunteers were motivated to apply to the programme for a range of reasons. Motivational differences were most notable by age, suggesting that that it may be beneficial to tailor advertising of the volunteer programme in different ways to target particular age cohorts.
- Attention needs to be paid to how future volunteering programmes are promoted to people who face barriers to participation (e.g. ethnic minority groups, people with disabilities and those not currently in employment or involved in volunteering).
- Consideration should be given to the compatibility of meeting volunteering legacy goals (e.g. increasing diversity, inclusivity and volunteering rates in the host-city population), while delivering a well-run mega-event.
- Mega-events require a combination of specialist and general volunteer roles. Where volunteering legacy outcomes are considered important, general roles can be allocated to those with the most potential to benefit from the experience.

### **Delivery of a successful volunteering programme for all**

- Legacy aims relating to increased participation across the population in a particular activity (e.g. volunteering or employment) are matched with a recruitment process that supports people not currently participating in these activities.
- Volunteers from a host city bring valuable local knowledge and an enthusiasm to represent their place of residence. This may make them more suitable for public-facing volunteer roles.
- In the interests of meeting the needs of volunteers with a range of different experience levels, opportunities should be available for volunteers to develop new skills, to use existing ones and to pass skills on to others.

### **Delivering a volunteering legacy**

- Achieving a volunteering legacy from a mega-sporting event for a host-city or nation is not inevitable. Careful consideration needs to be given to the demographic characteristics of those selected, including where they come from. A realistic ambition should be to try and reflect the demographic characteristics of the host city/nation.
- Communication is an important part of the recruitment process and delivery of an event, as well as how applicants can be supported to continue volunteering after an event (e.g. through signposting to local volunteering or other large events).
- Mega-event volunteers can also be supported after involvement through the provision of opportunities to continue socialising with other volunteers (e.g. social media groups or social events).
- Further research may be warranted to understand why some outcomes were less positive in Glasgow-based volunteers and how mega-event volunteer programmes can shape older volunteers' transition into retirement.

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