Overview of Volunteering and Volunteer Management Practice within Major Northern Ireland Events

Summary Report

September 2009
INTRODUCTION

The Volunteer Development Agency was initiated in 1991 and formally established in 1993. It is the centre of expertise for the promotion and development of volunteering in Northern Ireland. It values the contribution of volunteers and believes that this contribution needs to be supported in order to maximise its effectiveness. We actively promote volunteering through campaigns that challenge the image of volunteering, illustrate the diversity of volunteering opportunities and add volunteering to the mindset of everyone in our community. The Agency provides training, information and support to volunteer-involving organisations across all sectors of good practice and policy regarding volunteering, volunteer management, child protection and voluntary management committees / governance. It also plays a key role in administering grants related to volunteering for the Department for Social Development and the Department of Education. Further information on the work of the Agency can be accessed on www.volunteering-ni.org.

This report has been produced to show the current level of practice in relation to volunteering and volunteer management among major events in Northern Ireland. It has been produced as part of the implementation of the Northern Ireland Volunteer Strategy London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

CONTEXT

The Volunteer Development Agency (Agency), through Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) funding, appointed a Project Manager in September 2008, to manage the implementation and delivery of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Northern Ireland Volunteer Strategy.

Northern Ireland Volunteer Strategy London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

The vision of the Northern Ireland Volunteer Strategy London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is to “involve, recognize and maximize the contribution of volunteers as part of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a catalyst for inspiring increased volunteering” and aims to:

- Raise the profile of volunteering in Northern Ireland;
- Maximise opportunities for the recruitment of new volunteers; and
- Endeavour for “Team NI” Volunteers to be involved in Games Time and establish a legacy of supported and skilled volunteers for future events in Northern Ireland.
An Action Plan was developed which places an operational framework around the Strategy and includes the objectives to:

- *Establish linkages with other key sporting events to promote / develop volunteering opportunities.*

- *Review event management requirements for sports events and liaise with sports organisations and the University of Ulster to consider the development of accredited training for volunteers as appropriate.*
Methodology

In order to meet the objective a survey (please see appendix 1) was carried out with the major events in Northern Ireland to ascertain their current level of practice with regards to volunteering, volunteer management and potential training needs. It was sent to 21 major events organisations and this report encompasses the responses of 12 (57% response rate) (please see appendix 2).

Definitions

Volunteering refers to individuals and the work or action they undertake for the benefit of others or the community (outside the immediate family), undertaken by free choice and not directly in return for wages.

Volunteer Management includes among other things planning involvement, policy development, recruitment, selection, support, training and recognition of volunteers. Good volunteer management should nurture the desire of people to help and get involved while ensuring that it is done in a framework of good practice which supports and protects the volunteer and the organisation.

Formal Volunteering unpaid voluntary work carried out with, or under the auspices of, an organisation.

Investing in Volunteers

Investing in Volunteers is the national quality standard recognising good practice in organisations’ volunteer management. It is applicable to any volunteer involving organisation with any number of volunteers and is based on the 4 main areas of volunteer management:

- Planning for volunteer involvement
- Recruiting volunteers
- Selecting and matching volunteers
- Supporting and retaining volunteers

It is the catalyst to put in place processes, policies and procedures to allow organisations to support their volunteers in a meaningful way and reflecting the commitment of the organisation to their volunteers.
Major Events

The major events who have taken part in this survey are all involved with developing, managing and delivering major events in Northern Ireland; and involve the recruitment and management of volunteers.

Volunteering in Major Events Research

In 2007 the Volunteer Development Agency published It’s All About Time; a study of volunteering in Northern Ireland.

The research notes that 25.9% of formal volunteers undertook the activity of organising or helping to run an activity or event. When age is factored in, for those in the 16-24 year old age bracket the activity they are most likely to be involved in, more than any other age bracket, is in the organisation and running of events.
SURVEY SUMMARY

This survey looked at the major events in Northern Ireland, it was sent to 21 major events organisers and there was a 57% response rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities which volunteers are engaged in</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stewarding</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service / Registrations</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event Management</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance (ie Board / Executive Committee Member)</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR / Marketing</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officiating / Referee</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 12 (all respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current level of experience of recruiting volunteers</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very hard</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 12 (all respondents)

Research¹ shows that organisations are finding it harder to recruit volunteers; events note that 42% find it hard to recruit volunteers. Some of the factors are difficulties in:

- Recruiting people who want to volunteer; they want paid
- Recruiting volunteers with the correct training and capabilities
- Recruiting younger people to volunteer
- Getting volunteers to take on key roles

¹ It’s All About Time, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007
How Events recruit volunteers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal contact</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event website</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets (materials from your event)</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School / university / college</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local events</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through membership</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Newspaper</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV or Radio</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Centres</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers Volunteer Scheme</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennium Volunteers Programme</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Centre</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Campaigns (ie Volunteers Week)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 12 (all respondents)

- The large majority of volunteers are recruited through membership, personal contact or by their event website (92% in all three cases).
- While some do recruit through Volunteer Centres and Employers Volunteer Scheme, no events recruit volunteers through their Community Centre, Millennium Volunteers (MV) or National Campaigns (ie Volunteers Week).
- This demonstrates that there is scope to strengthen the link between the recruitment of volunteers in events and the wider volunteering infrastructure.

53%² of all formal volunteering organisations ask volunteers to complete an application form; 58% request same in events.

33%³ of all formal volunteering organisations provide new volunteers with an induction; 75% do the same in events.

This demonstrates that the formal application and monitoring processes within wider volunteer involving organisations and events is in line with good practice.

When recruiting volunteers Events²:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide new volunteers with an induction</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask new volunteers to complete an application form</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an interview / informal chat with potential volunteers</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undertake Access NI checks</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask new volunteers to provide references</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 12 (all respondents)

² It’s All About Time, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007

³ It’s All About Time, Volunteer Development Agency, 2007
Volunteer Management that Events Provided to Volunteers

- 58% have a written volunteer policy
- 92% are provided with the necessary support and supervision
- 67% of have written role descriptions for their volunteer positions; compared to 53.4% in It’s All About Time
- 100% provide recognition / acknowledges (ie events, materials, certificates) for their volunteers

Overall this survey indicates a strong level of volunteer management practice in the Events respondents

Training

Events were asked to provide details of the training they make available to volunteers. This enabled the statistics below to be collated in terms of establishing current training facilitation; alongside potentially highlighting areas which may require additional training support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current training provision within Events?</th>
<th>What should be included in a generic event management course for volunteers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
<td>Health and Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection</td>
<td>Child Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectator Control / Stewarding</td>
<td>Spectator Control / Stewarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aid</td>
<td>First Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Management</td>
<td>Fire Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Opportunities</td>
<td>Conflict Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Awareness</td>
<td>Equal Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 11

Base: 12 (all respondents)

- 82% of those surveyed noted their volunteer training lasted 0-10 hours, 9% = 11-20 hours and 9% = 31-40 hours.
- When asked how long they would envisage a generic event management course for volunteers to last: 61% said 0-10 hours, 8% 11-20 hours, 23% 21-30 hours and 8% 50+ hours.
- 67% of those surveyed feel there is a need for a generic event management course for volunteers in Northern Ireland.
- 58% of those surveyed said they would support (ie financially) their volunteers to participate.
CONCLUSION

It is widely accepted that events are more likely to attract and retain volunteers by providing volunteers with the management they deserve. That includes providing a clear understanding of organisational expectations of them, clear recruitment and selection procedures, provision of reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses, opportunity to take part in training and continued support and supervision.

Volunteers are essential to events in Northern Ireland and this report highlights their integral role; as well as noting the existing volunteer management and training in place and potential training opportunities. It is encouraging to note that events responding to this survey are demonstrating good practice across a number of volunteer management areas.

The majority of those surveyed agree that there is a need for a generic event management course for volunteers in Northern Ireland. This training could improve their effectiveness and efficiency in relation to the management of volunteers; as well as promote a positive image of the event in terms of its recruitment procedures and value of volunteers.

The Volunteer Development Agency is keen to offer an effective service to events in order to develop and disseminate good practice training / information and enable valuable volunteers to make their full contribution to the event’s goals; whilst developing their own skills and interests.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are designed to increase the capacity of the major events in Northern Ireland, individual volunteers and staff to enable management of change. Specific funding and resources need to be identified in order to enable some or all of the recommendations to be completed:

- Establishment of a named individual in each event to be the primary contact for information / recruitment / support of volunteers.
- Development of stronger links between events and the wider volunteering infrastructure through pilot of events calendar in partnership with volunteer infrastructure to assist in volunteer recruitment.
- Ensure that all events have an operational volunteer policy.
- Development of a generic volunteer event management course
- Events should use the Investing in Volunteer framework as a guide for developing good practice in volunteer management. Those organisations which are well established in their good practice of involving volunteers should be supported and encouraged to work towards accreditation in the standard.
Appendix 1

Volunteer Management Survey

This survey aims to collate an overview of current volunteer management practice for your event and establish current trading facilitation; and potentially highlight areas which may require additional training support.

1. Please enter your contact details

Name of Event

First Name: ___________________________________________________________

Last Name: ___________________________________________________________

Position: _____________________________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________

Postcode: _____________________________________________________________

Telephone: ___________________________________________________________

Email: _______________________________________________________________

Website: _____________________________________________________________

Volunteers and Volunteering:

Volunteers and Volunteering refer to individuals and the work or action they undertake for the benefit of others or the community (outside the immediate family), undertaken by free choice and not directly in return for wages.

2. How many people do you involve in your event?

Number of paid staff: _________________________________________________

Number of volunteers on the Board / Executive Committee: ______________

Number of other volunteers: ___________________________________________
3. Role of these volunteers (please tick all that apply)

- Governance (Board / Executive Committee)
- Event Management
- Stewarding
- Officiating / Referee
- Child Protection
- Transport
- PR / Marketing
- Fundraising
- First Aid
- Health and Safety
- Customer Service / Registrations
- Catering

Other (please specify)

4. How would you describe your current experience of recruiting volunteers to assist with your Event?

- Very Easy
- Hard
- Easy
- Very Hard

5. If your Event is finding it hard or very hard to recruit volunteers, why do you think this is?

6. How do you recruit volunteers? (Please tick all that apply)

- Event Website
- Millennium Volunteers Programme
- Through Membership
- School / college / university
- Personal Contact
- Local newspaper
- Word of Mouth
- Regional newspaper (eg Belfast Telegraph)
- Volunteer Centres
- TV or Radio (local or national)
- Local Events
- Leaflets (material from your Event)
- National Campaigns ie Volunteers’ Week

Other (please specify)
7. When recruiting new volunteers does your Event do any of the following? (please tick all that apply)

- [ ] Ask new volunteers to complete an application form
- [ ] Ask new volunteers to provide references
- [ ] Provide an interview / informal chat with potential volunteers
- [ ] Provide new volunteers with an induction
- [ ] Undertake Access NI checks
- [ ] None of the above

8. Has your Event a written Volunteer Policy?
   A volunteer policy sets out how volunteering will be promoted and managed within your organisation. It highlights the value and unique contribution of volunteers and offers a framework to develop procedures or practices in working with volunteers and monitoring, reviewing and development of volunteering.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

9. Do you have written role descriptions for all your volunteer positions?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

10. Are all volunteers provided with the necessary support and supervision?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

11. Do you provide any recognition / acknowledgements (events, materials, certificates) for your volunteers?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

   If yes, please specify

   

12. Do you provide volunteers with out-of-pocket expenses?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
13. Are all new volunteers provided with the necessary information and training for their role?

☐ Yes
☐ No (go to Q16)

14. If Yes, which of the following are included in the training provided to volunteers?

☐ First Aid  ☐ Communication
☐ Fire Awareness  ☐ Conflict Management
☐ Health and Safety  ☐ Spectator Control / Stewarding
☐ Child Protection  ☐ Equal Opportunities
☐ Customer Service

Other (please specify):

15. What length of time does the volunteer training provided last?

☐ 0-10 hrs  ☐ 31-40 hrs
☐ 11-20 hrs  ☐ 41-50 hrs
☐ 21-30 hrs  ☐ 50+ hrs

Additional information if required:

16. Do you feel there is a need for a generic course for event management volunteers in Northern Ireland?

☐ Yes
☐ No
17. If Yes, which of the following should be included?

- First Aid
- Fire Awareness
- Health and Safety
- Child Protection
- Customer Service
- Communication
- Conflict Management
- Spectator Control / Stewarding
- Equal Opportunities

Other (please specify)  

18. If available, what time would you envisage the above course to take?

- 0-10 hrs
- 11-20 hrs
- 21-30 hrs
- 31-40 hrs
- 41-50 hrs
- 50+ hrs

Additional information if required  

19. If available, would you support (i.e. financially) your volunteers to participate?

- Yes
- No

20. What are the biggest challenges in involving volunteers with your event?


21. Does your organization require any specific support at present to assist in developing volunteering?


22. If there are any other comments you would like to make, please do so here?


Appendix 2

The following organisations responded to the Events Survey:

Belfast Mela
Deep RiverRock Belfast City Marathon
Festival of Fools
Focusfest
Hospice Walk
International Indoor Athletics
Northern Ireland Milk Cup
Rally Ireland
Special Olympics Ireland
Summer Madness NI
Tall Ships Belfast 2009
Ulster Bank Belfast Festival at Queens
Acknowledgements
The Volunteer Development Agency would like to thank the Major Events in Northern Ireland for taking part in this Survey

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