

Assessing the role of the London 2012 Paralympic Games in the provision and management of grassroots sport for disabled adults

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Layout of the presentation

- Review of previous mega-events and sport participation
- How sport for disabled adults was provided before the London 2012 Paralympics
- How has sport participation for disabled adults been provided and managed since the Paralympics? What role has the Paralympics played in this?

Aim of the presentation

- To address the role and importance of the London 2012 Paralympic Games in the provision and management of grassroots sport for disabled adults in England.

Evidence of mega-events increasing sport participation

- Understanding of Paralympic legacies is weak
- Evidence from other mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, suggests the event, on its own, not enough to increase sport participation
- To increase grassroots sport participation it is important to use leveraging tactics

How was sport for disabled adults provided before the London Paralympic Games?

- Provision of sport for disabled people in Europe 'fragmented, complex and cumbersome' (Thomas and Guett 2014)
- In Britain, mainstreaming the preferred method
- Different types of organisations involved in disability sport, creating a complex structure:
 - National disability sport organisations (NDSOs)
 - National governing bodies of sport (NGBs)
 - Local authority delivery
 - English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS)
 - Sport England

Method

- Data is drawn from a larger, on-going mixed-methods study.
- Data used today is purely qualitative (semi-structured interviews).
- Purposive sampling used.
- 7 NDSOs and 2 national sporting organisations – Sport England and EFDS – comprise the sample.
- Data collection began in July 2015 and ended May 2016.

Findings: ‘Unable to respond to post-Paralympic buzz’

- Lack of planning contributed to organisations not being in a position to respond:
 - **“I don’t think we ever really fully understood what the market was, till 12/13...I just don’t think we were in a position of readiness...” (Respondent 9)**
- Success of the London Paralympics was greater than anticipated:
 - **“I just don’t think we were prepared for the potential interest level.” (Respondent 8)**
- Most NGBs did not have the capability and resources to cater for the increased demand:
 - **“They were overwhelmed with enquiries...after London 2012, and did not know how to cope with it.” (Respondent 1)**

Findings: ‘Development of the disability sport structure’

- Significant financial investment into grassroots disability sport
- Generation of data and insight
- NDSOs more professionalised as organisations:
 - **“...So you now have these organisations that are professional bodies...” (Respondent 9)**
- Increased collaborative working amongst the NDSOs:
 - **“One of the good aspects of this has been around the fact that NDSOs, we do talk to each other much more than we ever did, we’re much less territorial about things.” (Respondent 2).**
- Improved NGB and NDSO working relationship

Findings: 'Mainstreaming challenges'

- NDSO frustration at speed of NGB provision:
 - **“I did say to them, ‘we’re now in 2016 and you’re now talking about going to [specific impairment group]. What have you been doing for the previous few years?’” (Respondent 5)**
- The need to educate providers:
 - **“It’s a big culture change for NGBs ...I think, generally, there’s a lack of understanding about the vast differences between the various impairments groups...” (Respondent 2)**
- Disability competing with other priorities:
 - **“Some of the NGBs they have a member of staff who’s charged with disability, but it’ll be part of another role.” (Respondent 7)**
- Some NGBs are too talent and competition focused:
 - **“[They’re]... still very talent-orientated, and that’s the issue.” (Respondent 5).**
- Funding can be a challenge

Is the Paralympic Games the best way of increasing participation?

- Paralympics may not be the best outlet for achieving sustainable participation:
 - Not able to connect to everyday experiences
- Good tool for increasing awareness, but should not be the push for participation:
 - **“We can’t latch the success of the increase of grassroots participation on a 10-day event. We just can’t. There’s got to be structures in place that enable us to work through that, and just use that as a tool for awareness. That’s really what the Games is about, from my perspective.” (Respondent 6)**

What has been the role of the London Paralympic Games in the provision and management of sport for disabled adults?

- Helped develop the structure of disability sport
- Mainstreaming has remained the dominant approach, but challenges remain

What does the future of grassroots sport for disabled adults look like?

- Disabled people an important component of the Conservative's and Sport England's latest sport participation strategy.
- Potential for growth, but there are challenges.

What implications do the findings have?

- Increased understanding of Paralympic grassroots sport participation legacy
- Updated understanding of sport provision for disabled adults in England
- Highlighted some challenges in the mainstreaming of sport

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Questions?

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