

CASE STUDY

★ OPENING AND ★ CLOSING CEREMONIES

LEVEL 3 SCHOOL GAMES FESTIVAL CASE STUDY LINCOLNSHIRE

INTRODUCTION

Most of the pilot School Games activity concentrated on Level 3, i.e. multi-sport festivals for the whole area. In Lincolnshire, the festival took place on 14 July 2011, at Grantham Meres Stadium and Leisure Centre. The festival featured seven able-bodied activities and three disability activities – boccia, athletics and wheelchair basketball. Olympic gold medallist Jonathan Edwards and the Secretary of State for Health Andrew Lansley, attended the event.



COORDINATION

The local organising committee (LOC) included two headteachers, two directors of sport, two partnership development managers, representatives from the County Sport Partnership and the county council. At the outset the headteachers were unsure how much support they would receive when invitations were sent to potential partners to join the LOC. The fact that all partners agreed to support the School Games demonstrates the enthusiasm needed for the Games to go ahead. Engaging partners early in the process and clarifying roles helped to maximise the amount of time spent on the delivery of the School Games.

DELIVERY

It was clear from people involved in the LOC that the delivery of the School Games benefitted from the expertise of the school sport network. They played an important role in initiating the Games by utilising their professional experience in sport and existing network of contacts within Lincolnshire. With support from the County Sport Partnership they were able to utilise existing competition networks before identifying NGB leads in Lincolnshire who could support the School Games. They have also been able to improve club links by developing relationships with NGB staff in the aim of sustaining young people's participation in sport.

OPENING AND CLOSING CEREMONIES

The opening and closing ceremonies are a fantastic opportunity to showcase the hard work from everybody involved in the School Games and a celebration of the Level 3 festival. Lincolnshire actively promoted the Olympic and Paralympic values through the opening and closing ceremonies. School staff and

spectators all commented on how they enjoyed the ceremonies and what a success they were. The LOC met on a regular basis and jobs were allocated to members of the LOC based on past experience and individual strengths. This enabled LOC members to utilise existing contacts and produce a memorable opening and closing ceremony.

PLANNING THE OPENING CEREMONY

Lincolnshire delivery team felt that the opening ceremony should incorporate Lincolnshire cultural roots and decided flyovers and parachute jumps would really make the opening ceremony grand. There was an interest in using the Red Arrows but due to cost and availability this idea was not feasible. Contact was made with the parachutists and an inspection of the venue and checks with air traffic control were made to ensure the showpiece could be performed. On the day of the School Games a member of staff from the parachute team was on the ground in the venue to co-ordinate the jumps.

Lincolnshire delivery team wanted to make sure the young people were the focal point for the opening ceremony, the idea being to parade the young people competing around the athletics track was put forward. On arrival, the young people competing were registered and directed to holding zones for specific partnership areas of Lincolnshire. The young people were then paraded around the athletics track led by VIP guest Jonathan Edwards; young leaders were on hand to ensure that all partnership areas stayed together and were synchronised. Once all the young people had been presented, the parachutist dived and landed into the Olympic rings with the final parachutist delivering a speech from Lord Sebastian Coe.

This message was read out by Debbie Foote, an ambassador for young leaders who has been very active in campaigning for school sport. The Lincolnshire delivery team felt that it was important to include young people in the delivery of the opening message; Debbie was an ideal choice and could be seen as an inspiration to the number of young people both competing and volunteering at the School Games. To cement the Olympic feel to the opening ceremony the Lincolnshire delivery team hired the official Olympic mascots. This took careful planning to ensure the mascots had changing facilities close to the opening ceremony venue and maximise the presence of the mascots due to restrictions on how long they can be in the suits for.

PLANNING THE CLOSING CEREMONY

After a consultation with schools it was clear there would be a limited timeframe from the completion of the competitions to when schools would need to depart to allow sufficient time for the young people to return to their school before the end of the school day. The delivery team felt that the closing ceremony should be based around the young people; the winners of the competition and Olympic value awards were announced. The remaining young people were then once again paraded around the athletics track wearing Olympic coloured t-shirts to symbolise the different partnership areas. The winners were introduced to the spectators and young people and presented with their medals by the LOC and sponsors. The closing ceremony was rounded off with a fireworks display; these were specialist fireworks for use during the daytime that were bright, colourful and remained at a low level for all to see.