

HPA Update

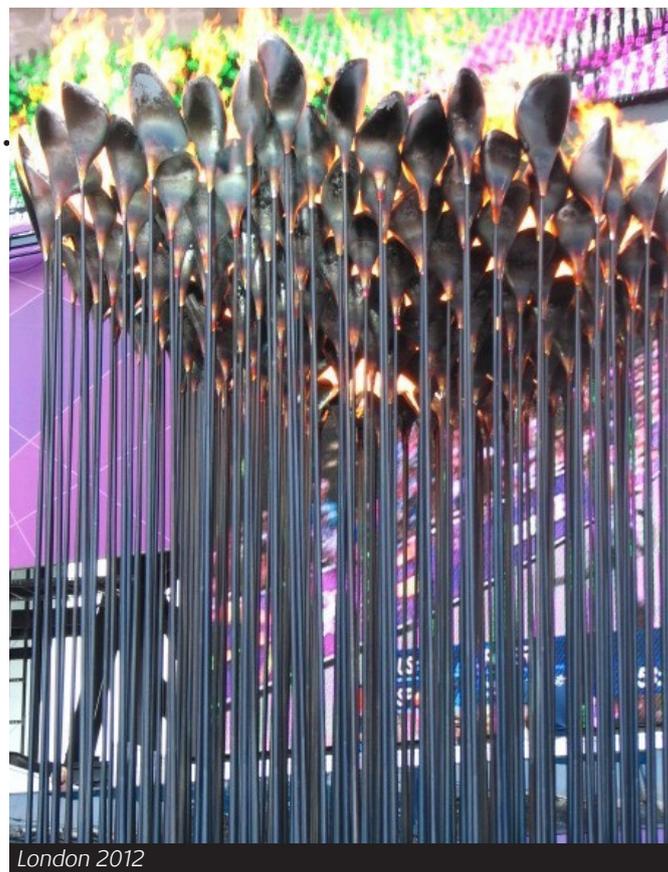
Lessons from the London 2012 Olympic Games

One of the key elements of the HPA's Olympic legacy will be identifying and learning from the experiences of both planning and delivery. This will inform and support planning for future mass gathering events as well as improving working practices within the agency and beyond. A number of debriefing sessions will be held to capture lessons from the Olympic Games and any changes needed for the Paralympics.

During Games time, work has been going on to identify key strategic lessons which could inform any changes in delivery during the Paralympics and to provide assurance that the planning put in place before the Games did deliver the Games commitments.

These include:

- Assurance that following the testing and exercising programme, all involved understood their roles and responsibilities; this was demonstrated by the efficiency and effectiveness of the reporting, investigation and response to queries and requests for further information
- Evidence that normal business, such as reports of vaccine preventable diseases and cases of diarrhoea and vomiting, take disproportionately longer to deal with if connected in any way to the Olympics through athletes, spectators or venues. This is due to the context and additional sensitivities from the political and media interest.
- The importance of having communications colleagues embedded within the OCC so media queries and reactive lines can be written and agreed very quickly. These lines have enabled most stories to be managed swiftly avoiding inaccurate reporting
- Ensuring good working relationships across partner organisations to facilitate early warning and appropriate management of any issues, for example, coordination between LOCOG, HPA and FSA to respond to and manage any diarrhoea and vomiting cases which may have links to food or food handling
- The importance of using normal procedures and processes wherever possible
- Making sure momentum is maintained in quiet periods with the flexibility to cut back operations
- Ensuring messages across health are agreed with key partners such as LOCOG and DH
- Dealing with accreditation issues for staff working in polyclinics



London 2012

Incidents summary report:

In the final few days of the Games, a number of gastrointestinal cases were reported and the HPA worked closely with the FSA and LOCOG's Catering, Cleaning and Waste team to investigate any potential food related cases. None of the investigations have identified a food source at an Olympic venue. A very large amount of work was undertaken prior to the Games to enhance surveillance, reporting and the food safety systems.

Sporadic cases of gastrointestinal illness occurred and were to be expected. It is also not always possible to identify a cause or source of infection and not all gastrointestinal illness is food related, even if people often tend to attribute illness to a recent meal. The numbers and pattern of illness seen during the Olympics are not unusual and are comparable with what has happened across similar mass gatherings. To date there are no indications of a common food source linked to failures in food safety management controls.

WHO Update

During the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, WHO has collaborated with the HPA and ECDC on public health issues. To date, the Games have passed without major incident, allowing WHO to focus on working with HPA to maximise the positive legacy of the Games; collaborating and sharing information to ensure a healthy Olympics in the UK and improve responses to future mass gatherings around the world.

Alongside the opportunity afforded by the Games to test a software tool for risk assessment and planning of major mass gatherings, jointly developed by WHO and HPA, the WHO has carried out regular interviews with staff in the national Olympics Coordination Centre at HPA, Victoria. These interviews have taken place throughout the Games period and will conclude in the weeks after the Paralympics are over with lessons identified, recorded and noted. An analysis of the processes, strengths and weaknesses of the HPA's approach to planning and running the Games will be carried out in late 2012/early 2013.

The WHO is also helping HPA prepare for September's International Observer Programme, where for several days during the Paralympic Games, the HPA and other UK health bodies will host organisers of future events, including religious gatherings in Iraq, a 2020 Olympic bid in Turkey, and the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

This programme offers opportunities for lesson sharing in all directions: as the observers gain experience of real-time working during a major gathering, their activities and observations will feed into the ongoing development of WHO mass gatherings tools and resources

Through the HPA's work and WHO's resource development projects and international networks, it is hoped that in future, particularly in less developed countries, planning for major events need not be a case of reinventing the wheel.

ECDC UPDATE

Overview of ECDC activities for London 2012

During the Olympics Games, ECDC established an enhanced event-based surveillance to help ensure any public health threats were recognised, assessed and controlled in a timely manner. It focused on worldwide events that could be considered potential threats for the Games according to criteria agreed with UK health authorities.

Throughout the Olympics, and continuing through the Paralympic Games, the Mass Gatherings team at ECDC scan the internet daily using a dedicated screening and filtering process. This process uses media aggregators customised to target topics most relevant to the Olympic Games. Identified events are discussed by the epidemic intelligence and mass gatherings teams, in order to decide which should be assessed and monitored and which should be discarded as irrelevant.

Relevant events are communicated to the HPA's international team through a dedicated ECDC extranet site. They are presented at the ECDC's roundtable meeting - ECDC's standing daily threat assessment forum. They are also reported to the daily teleconference of all those involved in the enhanced monitoring of the Olympic Games for the 12 weeks of enhanced activity

A daily bulletin containing the relevant event-based surveillance results for London 2012 is delivered to professional stakeholders in the UK, European Commission, WHO and EU Member States.

ECDC has tracked and assessed events such as the Ebola haemorrhagic fever outbreaks in central and East Africa, a cholera outbreak in Cuba and the spread of a new variant influenza A(H3N2) virus in North America over the past weeks, none of which were assessed as a risk to London 2012.

Despite the complex organisational and international setting, operations and collaboration among partners is going extremely well. This enhanced event-based surveillance will be continued at ECDC until the end of the Paralympics.

International Surveillance

An important part of the health protection response to London 2012 has been monitoring for any possible infectious disease threats to the Games from incidents overseas. The team responsible for this activity (drawn from HPA's National Travel Health Network and Centre and ECDC) established a robust system with a range of supporting tools for detection and risk assessment of overseas disease incidents.

The system was trialled and refined prior to the beginning of the monitoring period and since July, when the system has been in full operation, it has proven to have both high sensitivity and high specificity for relevant incidents. It has only needed very minor process modifications, mainly to clarify standard operating procedures.

The main learning for the international team has arisen from improved understanding of the requirements of the end users of

the information that it provides; this has become more clear in the live context than during the preceding exercises.

On the whole, the vast majority of considerable work that is done by the team, ultimately results in a nil report to LOCOG, providing reassurance that the global situation has been thoroughly appraised but that no threats to the Games from international infectious disease incidents have been identified. At the same time, information is also shared about events which might cause public anxiety and therefore require appropriate media handling, but which do not represent an actual threat to the Games.

The system will continue to function in the same way in the period before and during the Paralympic games and a formal evaluation of the system and the lessons learned will be undertaken on the basis of the data that have been generated during the entire monitoring period.

For further information:

Email: HPA2012@hpa.org.uk, or visit: www.hpa.org.uk/2012Games