

A UK-WIDE LEGACY? LEVERAGING THE OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC VALUES

› Legacy area: **MEDIA, CULTURE & TOURISM**

› Policy focus: **STRATEGIES**

› **THE EVIDENCE:**

The Olympic and Paralympic values can be used to help develop a UK-wide legacy

› **THE BIG THREE DEBATES:**

1.

Are the 2012 Games just about legacies in London, or can the rest of the country also benefit from the Games?

2.

Why do politicians prefer to talk about UK-wide economic legacies rather than social and cultural legacies?

3.

How valuable and important are social, cultural and health legacies in comparison to economic legacies?

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› WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

To justify spending £9.3 billion on the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, politicians and Games organisers often talk about the economic legacy that the Games will provide across the UK. But SPEAR's research on the impact of the 2012 Games outside London, funded by the [Economic and Social Research Council](#), shows that the most significant legacies around the UK are social, cultural and health legacies that cannot easily be given an economic value. Other SPEAR research for the [Department of Health](#), focusing on the [active celebration of the Games across the country](#), suggests that these social, cultural and health benefits can be achieved by focusing on the Olympic and Paralympic values:

- Initiatives that use Olympic and Paralympic values such as friendship, respect and equality, can be "matched" to the values people already hold, such as those focusing on family or community, to encourage volunteering, wellbeing and pride, or community celebration.
- The London 2012 Games has a wider set of themes and values, including sustainability and multiculturalism, which can be "matched" to people's existing lifestyle and eco-values to encourage participation in green initiatives and a range of artistic, cultural and heritage activities.

› HOW WAS THE EVIDENCE GATHERED?

Working with partners at [Bournemouth University](#) and the [University of Essex](#), and funded by the [Economic and Social Research Council](#), SPEAR hosted three 'think tanks' that brought together local, regional and national policy makers with leading academics to examine the likely impacts of the London 2012 Games outside the host city. These think tanks showed that an economic legacy outside London was unlikely, and that the Games might even have a negative economic effect in the rest of the UK. However, there was considerable support for the social, cultural and health legacies that could be developed across the UK. The evidence from these think tanks was collated and presented to a wider audience at a one day conference, [Leveraging Social, Cultural and Health Benefits from London 2012](#).

The Economic and Social Research Council project was followed by research for the [Department of Health](#) which, although primarily focused on physical activity, sport and health legacies, also [examined the celebratory nature of the Games](#) and allowed SPEAR to establish a framework for using a broad value set linked to the 2012 Games to engage people across the country in social, cultural and health related activities. This was based on [SPEAR's worldwide review of 53 of the best studies from previous Games and major events](#), and from research into previous successful community development initiatives.

› WHO WAS THE AUDIENCE?

The [Economic and Social Research Council \(ESRC\)](#) is a government funded research agency that supports high quality social science research that it thinks will have a positive impact on society or will help shape policy. The project on the impact of the 2012 Games outside London was the first project relating to London 2012 funded by a UK Research Council, and the funding was given because the ESRC felt that exploring social, cultural and health issues, rather than economic legacies, was distinctive.

The second piece of research was commissioned because the [Department of Health](#) wanted to know the best way to use the Olympic and Paralympic Games to promote health and physical activity. The original audience was local health promotion professionals, but its focus on using the Olympic and Paralympic values and London 2012's wider themes and values to get people involved has meant that it has also been used by many promoting the [Cultural Olympiad](#).

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› THE BIG THREE DEBATES

The evidence shows that the Olympic and Paralympic Games can have positive legacies across the UK. But, because politicians and Games organisers like to talk about the economic value of legacies, those social, cultural and health legacies that are difficult to present in economic terms are sometimes not emphasised. This means that it often looks like the biggest legacy value is in London because most of the economic legacy is focused on London. However, SPEAR's research shows that the Olympic and Paralympic values, and a wider set of values and themes that London 2012 has developed, can be used to engage people across the UK in a range of social, cultural and health related activities.

THE BIG THREE DEBATES ABOUT DEVELOPING A UK-WIDE LEGACY...

- 1 Will the most significant legacies of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games be in London, as the host city, or will the rest of the country also benefit?
- 2 Why do politicians mostly talk about UK-wide economic legacies rather than emphasising the social, cultural and health benefits to the rest of the country?
- 3 How valuable and important are social, cultural and health legacies compared to economic legacies?

› FURTHER RESOURCES AND READING

- Weed M, Mansfield L & Dowse S. (2009) Active Celebration: Using the London 2012 Games to Get the Nation Moving. <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SPEAR/ResearchProjects/Documents/Active%20Celebrations%20IM.pdf>
- SPEAR (2009) Leveraging London 2012 in the Regions. SPEAR bulletin: <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SPEAR/ResearchProjects/Documents/SPEAR%20Issue%201.pdf>
- Leveraging Social, Cultural and Health Benefits from London 2012: <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SPEAR/ResearchProjects/OlympicAndParalympic/LeveragingSocial.aspx>
- Weed M, Coren E, Fiore J, et al. (2009) A Systematic Review of the Evidence Base for Developing a Physical Activity and Health Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/Research/Centres/SPEAR/ResearchProjects/OlympicAndParalympic/OlympicPhysicalActivity.aspx>
- The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC): <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/>
- The Department of Health: <http://www.dh.gov.uk/>
- The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad: <http://www.london2012.com/cultural-olympiad>

CREDITS

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