



GUIDE

Leaving a Legacy: Lessons in city-wide volunteering programmes

Expert tips from the most impactful legacy programmes in the UK

Introduction



When major events bring people together their impact is often measured not just in the moment, but in the legacy they leave behind.

At Rosterfy, we've had the privilege of empowering some of the UK's most influential legacy programmes with our volunteer management software.

From Spirit of 2012, born out of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, to United by 2022 following the Birmingham Commonwealth Games, and now Bradford 2025 – the UK's 'City of Culture' – our platform has helped power the people and programmes driving lasting change.

Every successful legacy project builds on the lessons of the previous one.

In that spirit, this guide offers:

- An overview of the common challenges legacy programmes face
- Real-world case studies and insights from major UK legacy initiatives
- Quotes and advice from those delivering on the ground
- Practical tips to inform your future bids and programme strategies

At the heart of every legacy programme are the people who make it possible – the coordinators who share knowledge across projects, the communities who embrace opportunity, and above all, the passionate volunteers who give their time, energy and skills to create long-term impact.

Challenges in legacy and city-wide volunteer programmes

Legacy volunteering programmes come with their own unique challenges. Once the excitement of a city-wide event has waned - how do you keep momentum up for lasting impact?

Challenge	Impact	Solution
Late or No Legacy Planning	Loss of momentum after the event	Develop a clear post-event roadmap from the start
Funding Uncertainty	Difficulty sustaining staff, tools, and programmes	Build in multi-year funding streams from councils and partners
Reality Check	Over-promising leads to broken trust and disengagement	Communicate goals of the programme early and often
Post-Event Drop in Momentum	Volunteer engagement fades without reactivation plan	Use a volunteer portal to increase engagement and involvement
Legal or Logistical Barriers	Delayed contact and lost volunteer data post-event	Build contact consent post-event into the recruitment process
Weak Local Infrastructure	No platform or staff to carry legacy forward	Build mutually beneficial partnerships pre-event
Mismatched Volunteer Expectations	Disengagement from lack of relevant opportunities	Gather feedback on the roles that would be desirable

"A lot comes down to whether funds and resources have been ring-fenced in order for there to be a meaningful legacy from a volunteer programme"

Tamsin Cox, DHA Communications



Happiness at the heart of volunteering

Spirit of 2012 is the London 2012 legacy organisation. It was founded with a £47million endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund in 2013. Their research, learning and insights from over a decade of funding projects to inspire a social legacy is available at www.spiritof2012.org.uk.



Spirit of 2012

Spirit of 2012 is an apt place to start as it's commonly referred to as the organisation that **helped shape how the UK thought about legacies** - an event shouldn't be a one off but a programme to inspire pride, wellbeing, and lasting impact.

Summary

Funding: £47 million from the National Lottery

Key event: The London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Games

The vision

Happier People, Happier Places.

Mission

To build sustainable social legacies from the inspiration of events, investing to improve how people feel about themselves, other people and their communities.

Key areas of impact

- Funded over 234 grants
- 3.2 million people engaged
- 60,000 people engaged with volunteer opportunities
- 57% of volunteers under the age of 25
- 14% of volunteers were disabled
- 20% of funding specifically allocated for accessibility measures

[Read their 'Reflections of Volunteering Cities Report'](#)



“Through the projects we’ve funded, we’ve seen how powerful volunteering can be in bringing people together and the impact this has both for the individual and the community.

The recent reports we’ve published show it is crucial that event organisers build on lessons learned, planning for volunteering legacy from the very beginning, and the importance of long-term investment in volunteering beyond the event itself”.

Ruth Hollis OBE, Chief Executive, Spirit of 2012



A positive and lasting impact

United By 2022 is the legacy charity of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, supporting community-led projects across the West Midlands to promote health, equality, and opportunity beyond the Games.



United by 2022

Off the back of the record breaking Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, United by 2022 was launched to extend the impact and leave a remarkable legacy of volunteering and community spirit.

Vision

To continue to deliver meaningful experiences across the West Midlands, keeping the spirit of 2022.

Community Connection

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games served as a catalyst for community engagement, and United By 2022 continued to strengthen these connections.

The Volunteers Collective

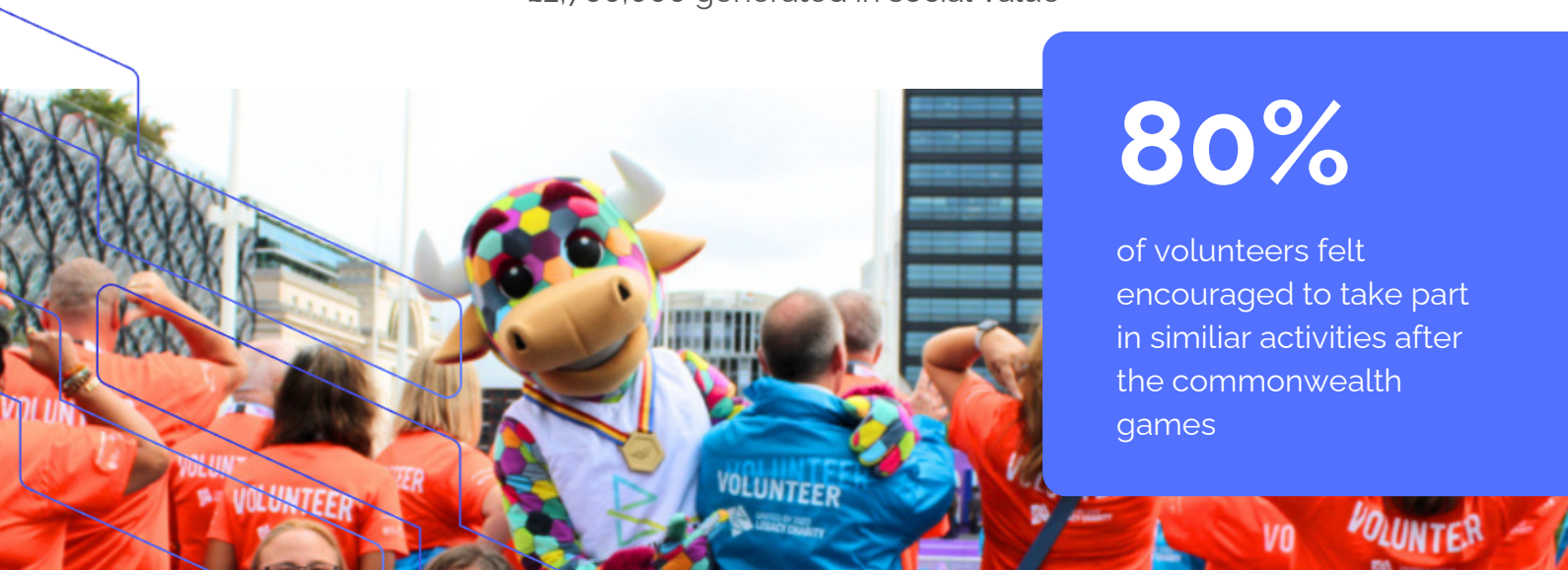
This initiative was launched in June 2023 to deliver on the legacy pledge made to volunteers at the commonwealth games. It supported volunteer engagement from over 2000 people and contributed to over 24,000 hours of volunteering.

Key areas of impact

- 2,367 events across 279 locations
- 43,088 volunteering engagements
- 1,403 of participants engaged in repeat activities
- 24,270 volunteering hours
- 28% of participants coming from 'deprived' areas of the West Midlands
- £2,760,000 generated in social value

80%

of volunteers felt encouraged to take part in similar activities after the commonwealth games



Outcomes-focussed community events

Bradford 2025's mission is to harness culture as a transformative force, celebrating its youth, diversity, heritage, and creative talent to power long-term economic and cultural regeneration.



Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture

This is a year-long celebration of the city's people and creativity. The programme of events is taking place over 141 square miles of West Yorkshire. A key feature of this initiative is its emphasis on the wellbeing and outcomes of each event or activity.

Summary

Funding: £15m from HM Government, £10m Metropolitan District Council, £5m from National Lottery Funding

Dates: Throughout 2025 into 2026

The Vision

"We're excited to be developing a phenomenal UK City of Culture, taking our history, people and places, and sharing how truly brilliant Bradford is" - Shanaz Gulzar, Bradford 2025, Creative Director

Mission

To make the people of Bradford proud and to make everyone outside the city want to be here. Our mission is to bring the people of the district together to deliver the biggest, most thrilling, inclusive and successful UK CoC yet.

Key areas of impact

- 1000 events made possible by volunteers
- Over 2000 volunteers registered
- Volunteer platform (Rosterfy) translated into 13 languages
- 25% of volunteers aged 18-27



25%

of volunteers for
Bradford 2025 are
aged 18-27



Setting your programme up for success after the 'big show'

The volunteer management community is one that openly shares good practice and advice for the betterment of future programmes. Here's some insights to creating lasting impact after major events.

A shared vision in the bid

"There were some things that were done during the [commonwealth] games which set us up for success and one of those things was they integrated the host city and event volunteers. We had a shared vision in the bid document - the games was for everyone" - Nicola Turner, United by 2022

Mind the gap

A key lesson in volunteer retention from previous events is avoiding a long gap between the end of an event and the next opportunity. Follow the footsteps of United by 2022 by ensuring a full calendar of events is already visible before the curtain comes down.

Multi-channel communication

Feedback from the Spirit of 2012 found that having a 'Portal + Person' model meant improvements could be made as the programme was in full flow.

Short-term funding cycles hold you back

"Having the funding through the years was critical. Working in a two or three year cycle doesn't build confidence. With a lasting funding commitment the volunteers will have the confidence the programme will have longevity" - Anthony Yates, Visit Hull & Yorkshire

You can find more insight in the Spirit of 2012 [knowledge bank](#).

Recommendations for event-focused volunteer programmes

- 1 Be clear and realistic about your objectives
- 2 Build on existing knowledge
- 3 Plan legacy from the beginning and establish it's strategic aims
- 4 Follow best practices seen in modern volunteer programmes
- 5 Capture as much as you can to pass onto the next event

The four key themes for volunteer programme longevity

Volunteer programmes that are built to make a lasting impact all have a strategic plan for these four key pillars.

Partnerships	Accessibility	Diversity	Legacy
Engage in local community groups and corporate partners to bridge gaps in your targeted demographics	Reduce barriers to volunteering such as language and cultural differences	Engage a range of demographics to ensure your programme better represents the local community	Create a robust and lasting programme
Establish a joint goal that aligns to your mission and that of your partner	Better understand how inclusive your programme is by using data and reporting from your volunteer management platform	Consider the obstacles to volunteering that some ethnic or social economic groups have that are unique to them	Increase an appetite for volunteering in the local community
Provide a service where your partner has gaps	Hire skilled talent in accessibility or train it into your team	Connect with people new to a location and help them 'feel part of something'	Show what could be achieved with long-term funding
Key Learning: Build partnerships into the plan and ensure you share a collective goal	Key Learning: Communicate the value of making your programme more accessible	Key Learning: Ensure you have a broad outreach for your programme and look beyond typical volunteering demographics	Key Learning: Build a plan for your programme that factors in long-term commitment
Case Study London Youth Games, a community-based programme leveraged their mission and impact to build corporate partnerships. Result: a 48% rise in corporate volunteers Find out more	Case Study Amdani Conwy! created a specific Diversity and Inclusion role in their volunteer programme to help people overcome barriers to volunteering. Result: Over 50% of their volunteers identify as living with a disability far exceeding the target of 7.5%. Find out more	Case Study Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture identified a significant lack of male volunteers in their community so reached out to male-focussed support groups to help promote their programme. Result: Male volunteers now make up the largest demographic in their database. Find out more	Case Study Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games already made a commitment to ongoing volunteering before the games began. Result: Over 2,000 people joined the Volunteer Collective via the legacy programme delivered by United by 2022 Find out more

Key diversity metrics organisations should track

Understanding who is engaging in volunteering is the first step toward building a more inclusive programme. Without these insights organisations may unintentionally exclude certain groups or struggle to identify where improvements are needed.

The following key metrics have been identified as essential for volunteer-involving organisations to track in order to strengthen DEI, identify gaps, and create more inclusive opportunities.

Demographic Representation

Collect information on age, gender, ethnicity, geography, and disability status to assess diversity.

Retention Across Groups

Identify disparities in long-term engagement and address potential barriers preventing sustained involvement.

Volunteer Satisfaction and Feedback

Use surveys, questionnaires, and focus groups to gain information on volunteer experiences and identify trends.

Application and Onboarding Drop-Off

Analyse at what stage potential volunteers disengage and refine processes accordingly.

Leadership and Role Distribution

Assess who is taking on leadership positions and whether opportunities are equitably distributed.

Qualitative Insights

Gather personal stories and feedback from one-to-one conversations to complement numerical data and uncover hidden challenges.



Why these metrics matter

Without data, organisations may unknowingly reinforce systemic barriers, limiting opportunities for diverse groups. Tracking these DEI metrics enables proactive, evidence-based improvements that foster a more representative and engaged volunteer base.

Case Study: **Bradford 2025**

Bradford is the UK City of Culture for 2025. To help deliver an incredible year of culture, Bradford 2025 are recruiting more than 3,500 volunteers.

As the most diverse UK city outside of London, the volunteer programme is committed to inclusivity and accessibility. By actively engaging individuals from various backgrounds, abilities, and experiences the programme ensures its volunteer force reflects the city's rich demographic makeup.

To build a diverse and representative volunteer community, Bradford 2025 have established partnerships with local organisations such as Race Equality Network. This helps the programme connect with different ethnic groups, promote volunteering opportunities, and provide cultural competency training.

To further enhance accessibility, all shift descriptions in the Rosterfy volunteer portal include detailed access information, and training materials are translated into the 13 major languages.

As John Strawson-Rooney, Volunteer Programme Lead at Bradford 2025, noted:

"I think the most important thing to help you recruit more of a diverse group of people is word of mouth, going in person to community groups and adult classes, that's been the best way we can reach people and help them know about our programme"

Who's signing up so far?

- 25% of volunteers aged 18-27, (above the national average of 15%)
- 24 languages spoken by volunteers besides English
- 59% of volunteers identified as being part of various Black or Asian ethnic groups⁸

Bradford 2025's focus on DEI not only enriches the cultural events it supports but also creates meaningful opportunities for personal and professional growth among their volunteers.

[Watch webinar with Bradford 2025](#)



Technology is an enabler for city-wide programmes

In the modern era of large-scale events, the success of volunteer programmes hinges not only on recruitment and engagement but also on the tools used to manage them. Technology plays a pivotal role in delivering a seamless volunteer experience - from the moment someone registers their interest to long after the event concludes.

At the heart of this transformation is the use of volunteer management platforms.

Streamlining the Volunteer Journey

Managing thousands of volunteers across different locations, schedules, and roles can be a logistical challenge. Technology platforms like Rosterfy bring structure and efficiency to the process by:

- **Automating workflows** such as application screening, training distribution, and shift allocation.
- **Centralising communication** to ensure all volunteers receive timely updates, role information, and support.
- **Tracking engagement** with real-time dashboards, attendance data, and impact reporting.

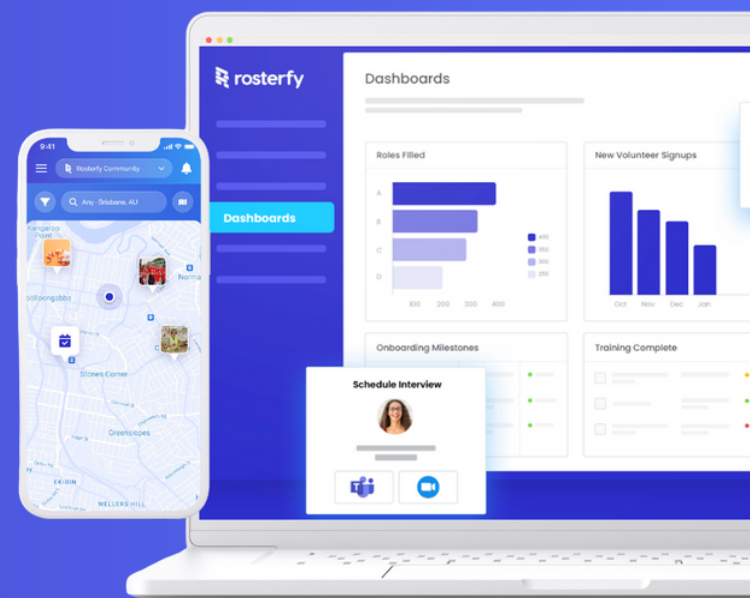
This allows organisers to spend less time on administration and more time focused on enhancing the volunteer experience.

Data-Driven Decision Making

The ability to collect and analyse volunteer data in real-time has shifted how legacy programmes measure success.

- **Engagement** metrics (e.g. hours contributed, retention rates)
- **Volunteer feedback** loops through surveys and check-ins
- **Post-event impact analysis** helps organisations understand where volunteers go next

This data not only informs the ongoing development of volunteer strategy but strengthens funding cases and legacy impact reporting.



Technology is a Strategic Asset

Technology is not just a tool - it is a strategic enabler of legacy. When used thoughtfully, it can foster more inclusive, scalable, and impactful volunteer programmes.

As we look to future cultural celebrations, sporting events, and civic movements, integrating smart volunteer platforms from the outset will be essential to delivering lasting value for communities.

How Rosterfy became a key partner for city-wide projects

Rosterfy is designed to streamline the volunteer management process, offering features that simplify volunteer engagement, training, and communication, making it easier for organisations to provide a world-class volunteer experience.

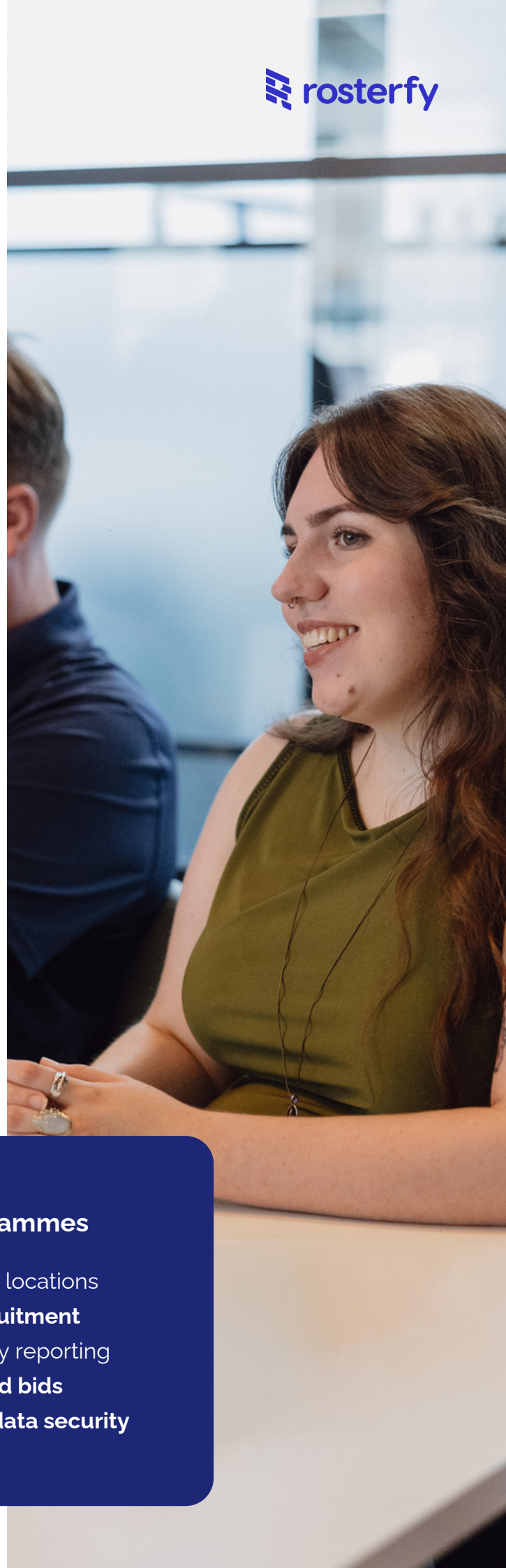
It's the focus on the **volunteer experience** and the **adaptability of the platform** that makes Rosterfy a stand-out choice for city-wide programmes.

Like the organisations we work with, we've learned a little something from each event and we're now able to not just deliver a software solution but add insight and value to the legacy project.

"They've loved it, they've really loved it.

A lot of our volunteers haven't been involved in a volunteer programme that's so well organised. Rosterfy helped us do that."

John Strawson-Rooney, Volunteer Programme Lead, Bradford 2025



Key benefits of Rosterfy for city-wide programmes

- Manage a **mix of volunteer roles** across multiple locations
- Improve the effectiveness of your volunteer **recruitment**
- Greater **visibility** of data and programme diversity reporting
- Create more impactful applications for **grants and bids**
- SOC2 and ISO 27001 compliance standards and **data security**



www.rosterfy.com