

# Sporting chances

London 2012 is a cause for national celebration – but also a potential headache for service providers. **June O’Sullivan’s** advice is “be prepared!” ...



This could be the **beginning** of a **big fitness** drive, too, as staff members are encouraged to walk or **cycle** to work... although this may also cause a **riot!**

JUNE O’SULLIVAN

**T**he Olympics are coming to town and we need to be ready. This thought struck me forcibly a few months ago when I began to examine the logistical problems we may face; I was probably playing sardines on a packed tube train, and wondering how well I will cope when I have to share the space with another three million tourists. And for those of you breathing a sigh of relief because you are not in the Olympic area, don’t be complacent – there will be events, support activities and celebrations in places all across the country. For example, badminton and rhythmic gymnastics will be held at Wembley Arena; the rowing and canoe sprint will take place at Eton Dorney near Windsor. Broxbourne will host the canoe slalom, and there will be mountain Biking at Hadleigh Farm in Essex.

In April, I organised a pan-London strategy meeting, because I wanted to ensure we could take as many precautions as possible to reduce the potential disruption the Olympics may cause. I was bothered by conflicting media information and keen to get the most informed views. Transport for London, City of London Police, and the contingency planner from Westminster Council gave us some very good advice. Colleagues from 20 of the 33 London boroughs came together to make a shared plan so we could remain calm, positive and constructive advocates for UKPLC during the Olympics, while giving the children a happy and safe time.

## Plans of action

There was much discussion about getting staff into work and home again in time for their shifts,

parents’ drop off and collection times were considered, and maintaining Ofsted ratios was a priority. We had heard that when it comes to transport – unsurprisingly – athletes are the priority, and there will be distinct coach and bus transport for them and the technical officials, accredited media and sponsors. Certain special Olympic and Paralympic Routes have been declared. Transport for London watchwords were: Reduce, Retime, Reroute, Remode.

In other words, think about reducing travel and avoiding unnecessary journeys; plot out the road hotspots and spend time on the TfL website to be fully updated. Ask parents if they will be taking leave or changing their hours, and plan staff deployment accordingly. If you run more than one service, reorganise so staff cover the centres that are closest to where they live. Home working is not much of an option for a nursery or holiday playscheme, but there may be the option to juggle hours. This could be the beginning of a big fitness drive, too, as staff members are encouraged to walk or cycle to work... although this may also cause a riot!

The police officer who attended our workshop had a sense of humour and balanced his gloomy take on security with an introduction to those rather eccentric characters who want to make a point by disrupting events. He told us that Fathers for Justice have promised an outing as well as peace campaigners such as Jimmy Jump and Cornelius Horan, both of whom get their kicks out of stripping naked, running off with the football, or charging down the middle of

## findoutmore

June O’Sullivan is the CEO of the London Early Years Foundation. Visit [leyf.org.uk](http://leyf.org.uk) or June’s blog at [juneosullivan.wordpress.com](http://juneosullivan.wordpress.com)



the racing track. They get publicity; we get more disruption.

## So consider:

- Staff travel – implication for ratios and overtime, and emergency contact arrangement.
- Deliveries of food – to stockpile or not?
- Arrival and collection times of children – implication for ratios, fees and flexibility.
- Is it worth purchasing a camp bed or two for unexpected overnight stays?
- Outings – where do we go (especially relevant for holiday clubs)?
- Making contacts with local nurseries to support each other.
- Identifying which hospital is the designated emergency centre.
- Updating everyone’s contacts – mobile phone networks can get overloaded, so make sure you have an alternative way of sharing information.

In short, like the Boy Scouts, the message for early years care providers in the capital and beyond this summer is... Be Prepared!

# 9,000,000

THE NUMBER OF SPECTATORS EXPECTED TO ATTEND OLYMPIC EVENTS THIS SUMMER.

PETER HENDY LONDON’S TRANSPORT COMMISSIONER