



The London 2012 Paralympic Games

Brought to you by Channel 4



Channel 4, with its unique model and remit, is in a position to push boundaries like no other broadcaster in the UK. Our remit clearly states that we should inspire change, present alternative views, stimulate debate, nurture talent and innovate – all of which was achieved with the coverage of the London 2012 Paralympic Games.

It is also part of Channel 4's DNA to take risks. When we bid to win the rights to broadcast the Games we had little evidence that there would be an audience to watch or advertisers to help us pay for the coverage. But we never had any question in our mind that this was exactly the sort of event Channel 4 is made for.

We have a long and proud history of programming featuring disabled people, and of confronting complex social issues. It was a natural fit for Channel 4 to cover the London Paralympic Games in a new way – bringing insight and perspective, and getting the tone just right. When LOCOG took the bold step of awarding the rights to Channel 4, we committed to provide the most comprehensive TV coverage ever of a Paralympics Games, and to raise awareness of the Games through the biggest marketing campaign in our history. We set ourselves a target that 50% of our presenters would be disabled and we committed over half a million pounds to training a new generation of disabled talent. We were confident that the quality and depth of our coverage would attract large audiences and deliver a step-change in how disability sport and disability are perceived by the audience.

Channel 4 is immensely proud to have delivered – and sometimes over-delivered – on its commitments over the course of the 12 glorious days of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. We provided over 500 hours of coverage across various platforms and almost 40 million people tuned in – delivering some of Channel 4's highest ratings in the last ten years. The quality and tone of our coverage was widely praised. And research shows that our programming – including the irreverent nightly round-up show *The Last Leg* – had a meaningful and positive impact on attitudes to disability sport and disability more generally.

As an extraordinary 2012 draws to a close, this booklet brings together the strands of our Paralympic story so far. For Channel 4 this is only just the beginning.

David Abraham
Chief Executive, Channel 4

Channel 4's Paralympic journey



What we said we'd do

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) awarded the UK broadcast rights for the 2012 Paralympic Games to Channel 4 on the basis of its commitment to deliver the most comprehensive and engaging coverage ever. Channel 4's aims were:

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Build Awareness of the London 2012 Paralympic Games

Channel 4 faced a number of challenges to draw audiences to the London 2012 Paralympic Games. It had to cut through public indifference towards disability sports and low levels of awareness of the Paralympics. It had to overcome potential audience fatigue following the success of the Olympics. And it had to confront some people's discomfort towards watching people with a disability on television.

'Meet the Superhumans' mixed bold and arresting close-up imagery of disabled bodies in training, competition and at rest with scenes that conjured up some of the extraordinary back-stories of the athletes. Set to a soundtrack by Public Enemy the ad had swagger and scale, making Paralympic athletes cool like never before, and conveyed the pride that Channel 4 was taking in broadcasting the Paralympic Games. 'Meet the Superhumans' was supported by a cheeky 'Thanks for the Warm-up' poster campaign around the end of the Olympics, making it quite clear that the Paralympics should not just be seen on par with the Olympics but as a thrilling event in its own right.



**6 PROMAX
Gold Awards**

**Golden
Podium Awards**
International Olympic
Committee's Grand Prize



*"The 'Superhumans'
campaign...really
makes people think"*
David Cameron

UNPROMPTED AWARENESS OF THE LONDON 2012 PARALYMPIC GAMES



end July 2012



end August 2012
(start of Games)

*"...that 'Thanks for the Warm-up'
stuff for Channel 4 was
completely right, it's
created an enormous
appetite in this
country [for the
Paralympics]"*
Boris Johnson

86%
of UK population
saw Channel 4's
on-air marketing
campaign

Biggest ever
campaign for
Channel 4 – across
78 channels
and over 2000
poster sites

*"The commercial
of the year by a
million miles"*
Trevor Beattie,
BMB co-founder

Discover a new generation of disabled talent



The Paralympic Games represented an opportunity for Channel 4 to discover and bring to the screen a new generation of disabled presenters and reporters. It also posed fresh challenges as we were keen to ensure our coverage was presented with authenticity and a level of expertise that would help the audience engage with Paralympic sport – many for the first time.

Channel 4's Paralympic bid committed us to a major talent search to ensure that "at least half of the on-air team will be disabled". A nationwide search began almost two years before the start of the Games, attracting around 300 applicants.

An intense training programme delivered by ThinkBigger (thinkbigger-presenting.com) included boot camps, work placements with other broadcasters and sports production companies (BBC, ITV, Sky, Channel 5, IMG, Sunset+Vine, Perform, ESPN and Film Nova) and real-world experience in front the cameras at live events such as the BT Paralympic World Cups on Channel 4. Successful applicants had to meet a series of tough criteria to ensure they could cope with the demands of fast-paced live sports coverage.

An ex-Royal Marine, a carpenter and a former Paralympic swimmer were among the new disabled presenters uncovered by Channel 4 in its talent search. The new team played major roles presenting and reporting on the 2012 Paralympic Games, giving credibility to Channel 4's coverage that it would not otherwise have had, and attracting widespread praise from viewers and commentators alike.

"[Channel 4's coverage was] informed, imaginative, thoughtful and breezy in equal measures...utterly defying all predictions"
The Times

82% surveyed said they enjoyed the fact that there were disabled presenters

£600k spent on nationwide talent search and training and a further **£250k** to develop the presenters' careers post-Games

74% of viewers liked the matter-of-fact discussions about disability

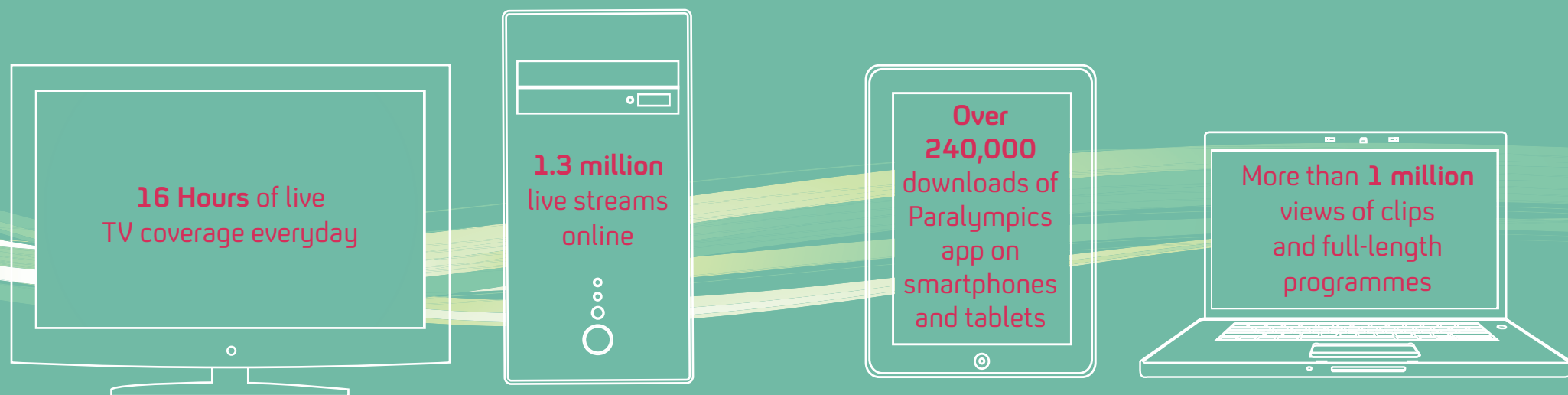
Deliver more comprehensive
coverage than ever before



Breakfast Show (7-9.15am) Presented by Kelly Cates and Rick Edwards **Morning** (9.15am-12 noon) Presented by Jonathan Edwards and Daraine Mulvihill **Afternoon** (12 noon-5.30pm) Presented by Arthur Williams and Georgie Bingham

Tea-time and evening (5.30-10pm) Presented by Clare Balding and Ade Adepitan **The Last Leg** (10pm-11pm) Presented by Adam Hills with Alex Brooker and Josh Widdicombe

**Channel 4's cross-platform coverage
meant viewers could enjoy the action
whenever and however they wanted**



Channel 4 committed in its bid to LOCOG to provide the most comprehensive Paralympics coverage ever, with more than 150 hours of television programming. In fact, we massively over-delivered. Not only did we shift the planned afternoon block of coverage from More4 to the main channel to give it more prominence, but we also provided an additional 350 hours of live coverage online and via three dedicated channels on satellite and cable. Viewers could also keep up with the action via dedicated Paralympics apps for mobile and tablet devices.

Channel 4 provided more than **500** hours of coverage across all platforms, four times more than was broadcast from the Beijing Paralympics in 2008.

"The extent of, and the quality of, the coverage of the Paralympics has been to the great credit of Channel 4... Channel 4 deserves praise for the seriousness with which it has covered the Games" The Times

MEET THE SUPERHUMANS



THE PARALYMPIC GAMES ON 4



Reach the biggest audience ever in the UK

One of the biggest challenges facing Channel 4 was to draw large audiences to its Paralympic Games coverage. Channel 4's success in capturing the excitement and emotions of the Games – helped by the impact of its marketing campaign and the quality and extent of its programming – is reflected in the record viewing figures for its coverage.

Almost **40 million** people – more than two-thirds of the UK population – watched the Paralympic Games on TV *

* three-minute reach of TV coverage over duration of Paralympic Games

6.3 million viewers watched Jonnie Peacock win the T44 100m Gold medal, the largest rating for a single competition event

11.6 million peak viewing levels for the Opening Ceremony, Channel 4's biggest audience in more than a decade

25% of all TV viewers watched Channel 4's Paralympics coverage every day

251% increase in daily reach compared to viewing of the 2008 Beijing Paralympics

THE LOW DOWN



Research commissioned by Channel 4 showed that a third of UK adults found the disability classifications confusing and would be more interested in watching Paralympic sports if they had a better understanding of the eligibility rules for each event.


Channel 4 worked with Paralympic gold medallist Giles Long to develop LEXI, a new graphics-based system that helps viewers understand the classification system used to distinguish different levels and forms of disability amongst Paralympic athletes. The LEXI system – which was endorsed by LOCOG and the British Paralympic Association – gave viewers an extra depth of understanding that helped them appreciate the London Games.

85% of viewers agreed that the LEXI classification system was explained well in the Channel 4 coverage

"The 'Lexi' system that it used to explain the different classifications was essential viewing"
The Daily Telegraph

Channel 4 commissioned a series of research projects to assess the impact of its Paralympics coverage on society's attitudes to disability sport, and to disability more generally. Over the course of two years, academics from Bournemouth University Media School conducted in-depth interviews with able-bodied and disabled individuals from a cross-section of British society. Three waves of research were undertaken – two prior to the Paralympic Games and one following their conclusion. In order to get direct feedback from viewers during the Paralympics themselves, Channel 4 also conducted daily audience surveys while the Games were running along with a further survey immediately after the Closing Ceremony. Almost 3,000 viewers were surveyed overall.

The quantitative research and in-depth interviews pointed to significant positive shifts in levels of interest in, and attitudes towards, disability sports. More people watched the Paralympic Games than ever before, while the interviews showed that viewers' attention quickly moved away from the disabilities to the thrills and excitement associated with watching live sport.



Change attitudes to disability sport

Key positive changes in attitudes identified in the interviews:

- Viewers conveyed vividly how they became caught up in the emotions and thrills of the Games
- There was a clear shift amongst audiences from focusing on athletes' disabilities to sporting excellence in the Games
- Some people with disabilities said that watching the Paralympics had made them more motivated to participate in sports themselves.

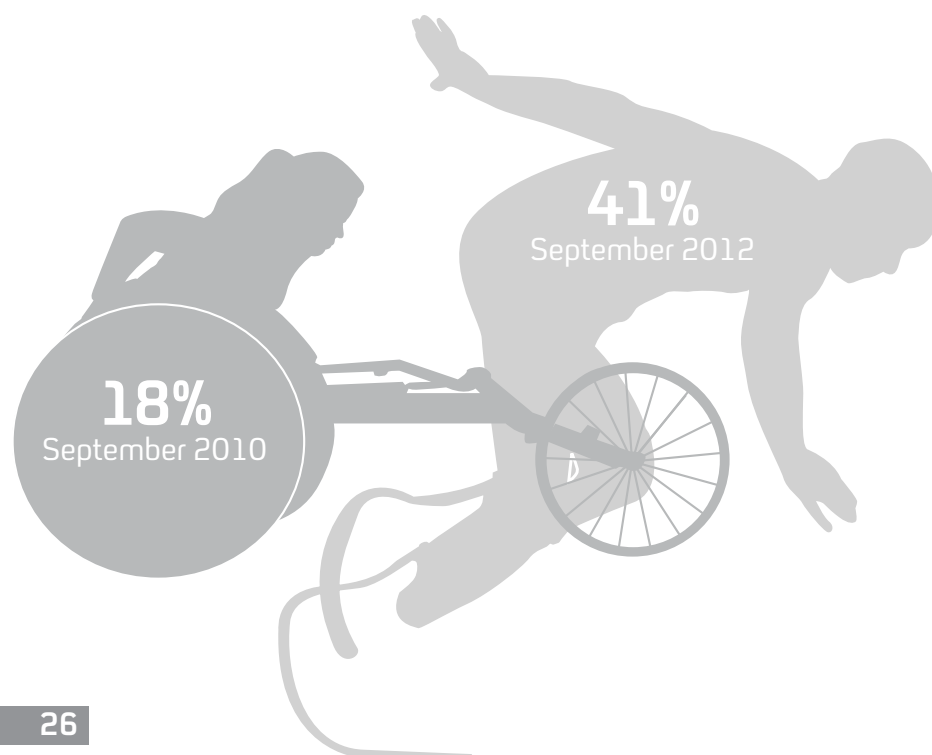
"Participants struggled to find words strong enough to express their sense of wonder at the feats and achievements witnessed on their screens"

*Conclusions from independent academic consumer research conducted by **Bournemouth University Media School***

"Now, when we see a disabled athlete, we speak the language of thoughtful admiration. The people of Channel 4, who did most of the broadcasting for the Paralympics were especially good at speaking it."

The Daily Telegraph

PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION ABLE TO NAME A BRITISH PARALYMPIAN WITHOUT BEING PROMPTED



65% of people thought it was the best Paralympics Games of all times

69% of viewers said that London 2012 was the first time they had made an effort to watch the Paralympics

85% of people who had watched previous Paralympic Games on TV watched more of the coverage in London 2012

91% of viewers thought that disabled athletes are as talented as able-bodied athletes

Challenge attitudes to disability more generally

Disability became a mainstream topic of interest in the news and media during the London 2012 Paralympic Games. The achievements of the ParalympicsGB athletes became headline news, as their triumphs were celebrated widely. It was easy to forget how rarely disabled people usually appear in the mainstream media. The research and interviews commissioned by Channel 4 suggest that the Paralympic Games had a marked impact on the general public's attitudes towards disability. The academics conducting the interviews concluded that in everyday experiences in public environments, admiration displaced sympathy or pity in how able-bodied people discuss and interact with disabled people.

Key positive changes in attitudes identified in the interviews:

- Participants were convinced that attitudes towards disability had changed as a result of the Paralympics
- There was a marked reduction in the discomfort felt by some viewers watching people with disabilities on screen
- There was greater confidence amongst able-bodied people in the language they use when referring to aspects of disability
- There was greater awareness and understanding of different kinds of disabilities

"There was like a two-week period when it was very positive to be disabled. Suddenly [people] realised it's not a scary thing to talk to me"

*disabled participant in interviews conducted by **Bournemouth University Media School***

83% of viewers surveyed agreed that Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympics will improve society's perceptions of disabled people

74% of young viewers aged 12-16 (and 56% of all viewers) felt more comfortable talking about disabilities after watching Channel 4's coverage

64% of viewers said they felt more positive towards disabled people as a result of watching Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympics

Is it OK to say?

Channel 4 rounded off its Paralympics coverage each evening with *The Last Leg*. Presented by Adam Hills with Alex Brooker and token able-bodied sidekick Josh Widdicombe, this offered an alternative take on each day's action at the Games, reviewing the highlights and tackling the intricacies of disability sport. The show confronted people's discomfort in talking about disability head on, with its nightly feature in which guests responded to viewer tweets – using the #isitok hashtag – in which they posed questions about the Paralympics or disability that they were not sure if it was OK to ask.

"This programme has begun to change not just the way we talk about [disabled people] but, crucially the way we think about them"

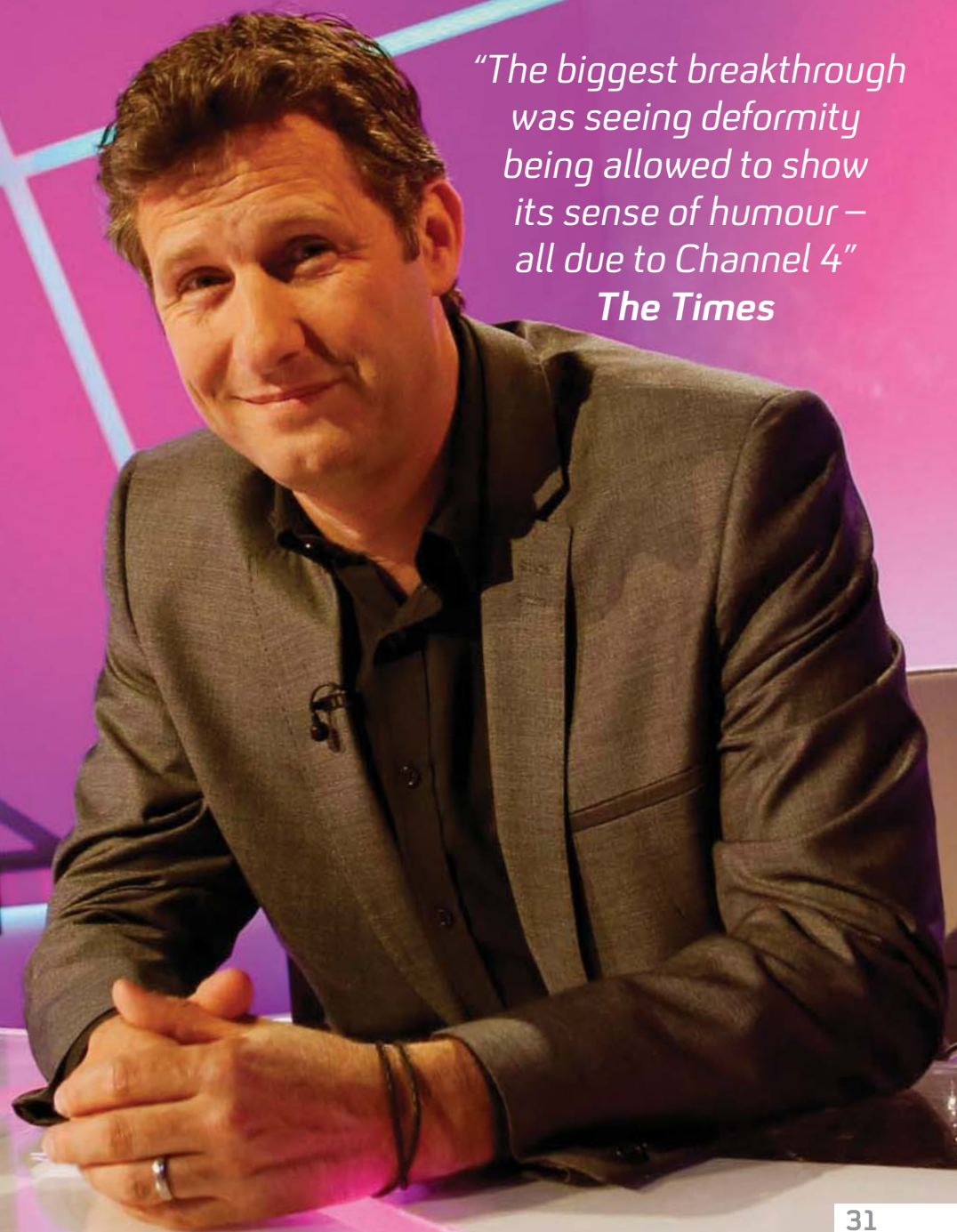
The Observer

**More than
1 million**
viewers on
average each
evening

**More than
9 million**
people watched
The Last Leg over
the course of the
Paralympic Games

*"The biggest breakthrough
was seeing deformity
being allowed to show
its sense of humour –
all due to Channel 4"*

The Times



Where next?

Since it began in 1982 – over 30 years ago – championing marginalised communities has been key to Channel 4's sense of purpose. We have a strong track-record in programming featuring disabled people, and the evidence presented in the previous pages shows that Channel 4's approach to the London 2012 Paralympics has had a real impact. Yet many would argue that disabled people remain ignored and side-lined by British society.

The academic research undertaken by Bournemouth University referenced in previous pages shows that many people remain uncomfortable with seeing disabled people on television. They struggle with the appropriate language to use. And the focus on the extraordinary achievements of elite athletes can seem remote from the day-to-lives of disabled people.

It is clear that there is a great deal still to achieve.

Following the success of the Paralympics, Channel 4 is more committed than ever to bringing disability into the mainstream. We have committed £250,000 in the short term to ensure that disabled people appear throughout the Channel 4 schedule – from current affairs to drama to lifestyle programming. *The Last Leg* has been commissioned for 2013 and a special edition will appear during the Christmas period. Many of those trained as presenters and reporters for the Paralympics are working with Channel 4 to continue their careers on television. Channel 4 has ambitions to continue to be the Paralympic Broadcaster beyond 2012, and has submitted a bold creative bid to the International Paralympics Committee to continue to bring Paralympic sport to viewers up to and including the next Paralympic Games in Rio 2016.

The potential to fundamentally change the way that people feel about disability is within our grasp. We have the opportunity to provide people with a way to talk about disability in a new way and to make people feel more comfortable seeing bodies that challenge our perceptions of the 'norm'. It is an exciting time and Channel 4 is leading the way.

Stay tuned ...





channel4.com

Key data sources:

BARB: TV viewing data. **BDRC Continental:** Daily online audience survey. Total of 1833 viewers, representative of UK adults, undertaken between 29 August and 6 September 2012; **BDRC Continental:** Weekly online audience survey, conducted between 27 July and 29 August 2012, each comprising a nationally representative sample of 300 UK adults. **YouGov:** Online survey of audience views after the conclusion of the Paralympic Games. Sample size was 1027 adults, representative of UK adults, undertaken between 6-7 September 2012. **Ipsos MORI:** Survey tracking awareness and attitudes towards the Paralympics. Total of 12 waves of research conducted between February 2010 and September 2012, each comprising a nationally representative sample of c.1,000 UK adults. **LOCOG**