

It's possible to manage the logistical challenges posed by the Olympics and make the most out of a fantastic summer of sport at your setting, says NDNA chief executive, **Purnima Tanuku...**



let the GAMES BEGIN!

Q What kind of issues are likely to occur during the Olympic Games in my setting?

A The Olympic and Paralympic Games will see over 15,000 athletes competing in the biggest sporting event in the world, with over 10 million people watching events live and billions more watching the Games on television. This is an exciting opportunity to showcase the UK at its best, but like any large event it will bring challenges.

You may have heard about the disruption which could be caused: more extreme examples include fears of staff having to sleep at nurseries on camp beds! The Games will affect providers all over the UK, but those based in London or near Olympic venues are likely to face the biggest challenges. These could include:

- Staffing issues – will I have enough staff to meet ratios?
- Disrupted transport, affecting staff and parents.
- Technology failures, for example, slower Internet speeds or jamming of mobile phone networks at peak times.

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NDNA is the national charity and membership association for nurseries across the UK. You can download the NDNA Olympic factsheet by visiting www.ndna.org.uk/olympic-factsheet

Q What can I do to address these issues?

A Planning is the key to avoiding problems. Most nurseries will have a comprehensive business continuity plan in place, so it's a case of extending this to cover the additional risks. It's also important to remember that not every eventuality can be planned for, and that a flexible, can-do attitude goes a long way.

There is likely to be increased demand for annual leave during the Games, too. It's

advisable to have a policy in place which offers staff the chance to enjoy the event whilst maintaining your ratios. Make sure staff are briefed in advance about any temporary changes to your HR policies during the Games, including annual leave policies.

If you have concerns about Internet or mobile phone provision, it's best to speak to your provider. There is not expected to be major disruption to telecommunications, but you may want to make sure you have a landline contact number for all children in case of emergency.

Q I manage a nursery in central London and am concerned about transport delays affecting staff and parents – what can I do about this?

A Nursery staff, especially those in London, may find that their journey time to work is increased. Managers should work with their teams on planning their journey to work and see if there are any alternative ways team members could get to work during the Games. Some staff may need to change their normal working hours; it's important to anticipate who this will affect and look at temporarily making changes to rotas.

It might be necessary to ask staff who are able to walk to work to be on-call to provide emergency cover or cover for other staff who have changed their hours. It's important to talk to these team members in advance, and establish if they will be able to work extra hours.

Transport issues will also affect parents, so brief staff to be prepared to stay a bit longer if parents are late, and agree your policy, in advance, for charging parents for late collection. It's a good idea to nominate a member of staff to check the Transport for London website regularly, so you can anticipate if there are likely to be late collections.

Q How can I make the most of the Olympic Games?

A Although the Olympic Games present challenges, it's important to remember that they offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness the world's biggest sporting event in the UK. Make sure the children in your care get the most out of the Games, whether by holding a themed sports day, creating arts and crafts or allowing children to try new foods so they can 'eat like an Olympian' or try different national dishes. The Games offer a chance to teach children about both exercise and a healthy lifestyle, and to help them learn about other cultures.

