
SPORT FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: REACHING THE GRASSROOTS

Roundtable Report

December 2017

Attendees

Dilys Alam	Deputy Director, Troubled Families Programme, Department for Communities and Local Government
Jane Ashworth	CEO, StreetGames
Kate Bosomworth	Consultant and Strategic Advisor, Sports & Business Council
Edward Boyd	Managing Director, Centre for Social Justice and former Special Advisor, Department for Work and Pensions
Andy Cook	CEO, Centre for Social Justice
Tracey Crouch MP	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Civil Society, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
Huw Edwards	Public Affairs Director, ukactive
Michael de Giorgio	Co-Founder and Trustee, Greenhouse Sports
Chris Grant	CEO, Spoted
Julia Grant	CEO, Pro Bono Economics
John Kinder	CEO, Rivertrade
Nick King	Special Advisor to the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Department for Communities and Local Government
Thomas Leftwich	Head of Engagement and EU Exit, Office for Civil Society
Duncan Prime	Head of Education and Wellbeing, Youth Justice Reform Programme, Ministry of Justice
Richard Sangster	Head of Obesity Policy, Department of Health
Joe Shalam	Researcher, Centre for Social Justice
Phil Smith	Director of Sport, Sport England

This event took place on 7 September 2017. Please note that, while the points made in our report draw upon some of the major themes discussed at this roundtable, each point should not be construed as representative of all the parties outlined in this list.

Introduction

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has long championed the power of sport to transform lives.¹ Like many others we welcomed the Government's 2015 sports strategy, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*,² which adopted the CSJ's view that sport and physical activity can bring far more to society than medals. At the strategy's heart were five holistic aims:

- physical wellbeing;
- mental wellbeing;
- individual development;
- social and community development; and
- economic development.³

Reaching these outcomes is vital in the fight against entrenched poverty across the UK.

Yet there is evidence that we are not taking full advantage of sport's enormous potential. The Active Lives Survey published in October 2017 found that, while 70 per cent of people in the highest socio-economic group are active each week, less than half of people in

1 See: Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), *More than a Game: Harnessing the power of sport to transform the lives of disadvantaged young people*, May 2011 [accessed via: www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/20110523_CSJ_More_than_a_Game_web.pdf]; CSJ, *Sport for Social Good: Revisiting More than a Game*, Mar 2015 [accessed via: www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJ3207_Sports_Paper_03.15_WEB.pdf]

2 HM Government, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, Dec 2015 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation]

3 Ibid

the lowest group are.⁴ Worse still, people in lower socio-economic groups are twice as likely to be inactive – that is, to perform fewer than 30 minutes of physical activity in any given week.⁵

On 7 September 2017, we hosted Sports Minister Tracey Crouch MP and senior civil servants from a number of government departments, as well as representatives from Sport England and grassroots sport networks, to discuss how best to reach those on the margins of society and realise the strategy's ambitious vision. We also took submissions from grassroots sports organisations, who offered fresh experiences from the frontline of both the successes and challenges posed by the strategy. This paper brings together some of the main themes and proposals that arose in the pre-event submissions and the roundtable's discussion.

4 Sport England, *Sport and Physical Activity Levels amongst adults aged 16+*, Oct 2017, Table 1 [accessed via: www.sportengland.org/media/12451/tables-1-4_levels-of-activity.xlsx]

5 Ibid

Context: sport's transformative potential

It is now widely recognised that sport⁶ and physical activity have the potential to positively transform lives. Compelling evidence gathered in recent years has shown this to be the case, particularly for individuals struggling with complex and multiple challenges.⁷

Sport and physical activity alone will never provide a universal remedy to society's most pressing issues, which the CSJ has identified as the five pathways to poverty: family breakdown, educational failure, worklessness, addiction and severe personal debt.

However, the role of sport for social good in these areas (and indeed beyond) is such that, for any government interested in social justice, a sport and physical activity policy that reaches grassroots communities is essential.

6 In line with the changes introduced by *Sporting Future* this paper adopts a definition of 'sport' which covers the wide spectrum of activity people are able to undertake. As pointed out by respondents to our submission request, the benefits of different types of physical activity vary accordingly: team sports, for example, were cited as being especially effective at furthering social development and community cohesion, whereas individual activities were noted for their capacity to improve mental health. Given how low levels of activity are (see p.14), however, the CSJ supports the Government's current priority to improve basic activity rates, with a longer term aim to make the benefits of organised sport available to all.

7 See, for example, Sport and Recreation Alliance, *Game of Life: How sport and recreation can make us healthier, happier & richer*, 2012 [accessed via: <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/2d77274e-af6d-4420-bdfb-da83c3e64772.pdf>]

Sport for social good

In particular, CSJ research has highlighted the impact of positive sport experiences on:

Education

The participation of underachieving young people in sport has been found to have a positive impact on educational development. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) found, for example, that underachieving young people participating in extra-curricular activities linked to sport could increase their numeracy skills on average by 29 per cent above those who did not participate in sport.⁸

Behaviour

Programmes that encourage participation in physical activities also have the potential to tackle ingrained anti-social behaviour. It is revealing that seven out of ten parents and their teenagers say that anti-social and criminal behaviour is linked directly to boredom.⁹

One prominent example of an effective programme is the Premier League's Kicks, which aims to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in crime hotspots through sport and development sessions. Some 180,000 young people have taken part in the project since its inception

8 DCMS, *Understanding the drivers, impact and value of engagement in culture and sport*, Jul 2010 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/71231/CASEsupersummaryFINAL-19-July2010.pdf]

9 CSJ, *Sport for Social Good: Revisiting More than a Game*, Mar 2015 [accessed via www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSJJ3207_Sports_Paper_03.15_WEB.pdf]

in 2006, and authorities report a reduction of up to 50 per cent in anti-social behaviour in the areas where it is delivered.¹⁰

Beyond reducing youth crime specifically, sport and physical activity has been shown to help rehabilitate offenders back into society and enhance social cohesion.¹¹

Employment

Playing sport can also boost employability. Physical activity releases chemicals in the body that have the effect of increasing energy levels and feelings of positivity, which consequently increase motivation levels and productivity. These factors are crucial when searching, and applying, for work.

Participation in sport is associated with an 11 per cent increase in the likelihood of having looked for a job in the last four weeks among people who are unemployed.¹² And the data collected in a study of 25 European countries suggests that there is a direct causal link between an individual's sport participation and their employment status, especially for males.¹³

Using this link, the 'sports for employment' charity Street League supported 1,553 young people from predominantly disadvantaged

10 The Premier League's Kicks programme [accessed via: www.premierleague.com/communities/programmes/community-programmes/pl-kicks]

11 See: Sport and Recreation Alliance, *Uncovering the Social Value of Sport*, Feb 2016, pp18–20 [accessed via: <http://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/0f6b1aac-a3c8-436c-98f0-973f97c128d8.pdf>]

12 DCMS, *Quantifying the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport*, Apr 2014 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/304896/Quantifying_the_Social_Impacts_of_Culture_and_Sport.pdf]

13 G Kavetsos, 'The impact of physical activity on employment', *Journal of Socio-Economics*, vol 40, no 6, Dec 2011, pp775–9 [accessed via: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2011.08.011>]

areas into employment, education and training through its sport and skills programmes in 2016–17.¹⁴

Health

Less surprising is the positive impact of sport on physical health. Regular physical activity can reduce the risk of many health problems, including coronary heart disease, stroke, type two diabetes, cancer, obesity, and musculoskeletal conditions.¹⁵

The UK Chief Medical Officer therefore recommends that adults perform up to 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week, and that children and young people undertake at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.¹⁶

The benefits of sport and physical activity to mental health are also well documented. For example, there is an approximately 30 per cent lower risk of depression and dementia for adults participating in daily physical activity.¹⁷ Likewise, the same activity produces a 20 to 30 per cent lower risk of adults feeling regular distress and anxiety.¹⁸

Strong anecdotal evidence also suggests that the sense of structure, order and camaraderie gained from playing many sports provide experiences that are missing from many of the lives of society's hardest to reach.

14 Street League, *2016/2017 Annual Report*, Mar 2017 [accessed via: <https://online.flowpaper.com/7ae20785/StreetLeagueAnnualReport201617SinglePagesHD/docs/Street-League-Annual-Report-2016-17-SinglePagesHD.pdf?reload=1508753606279>]

15 Department of Health (DH), *Start Active, Stay Active*, Jul 2011 [accessed via: www.sportengland.org/media/2928/dh_128210.pdf]

16 Ibid

17 Ibid

18 Ibid

The sports strategy across government departments

Clear from the assessment above is the benefit of sport to society beyond its capacity to win us medals – as important as winning medals are. Also evident is that the potential of sport spans the policy objectives of multiple government departments.

A successful sports strategy should, therefore, reach further than DCMS, and even the Department of Health or the Department for Education.

The CSJ has argued that sport should be involved in how the Ministry of Justice tackles reoffending, how the Home Office combats gang violence and extremism, how the Department for Communities and Local Government can foster social integration, and how the Department for Transport can create an environment where physical activity is ‘the norm’.

Thankfully, the Government’s sports strategy recognised the importance of such a cross-governmental approach. Beginning its consultation with themed ministerial forewords across nine government departments, *Sporting Future* stated that:

Sport and physical activity touches on areas and issues across a huge range of government interests... To support this strategy a new and more joined-up approach to delivery and funding needs to be taken across government. We will put in place the structures needed to make this happen...¹⁹

19 HM Government, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, Dec 2015
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation]

One welcome new structure the strategy introduced was an annual report to Parliament, updating the House on the progress of the strategy's implementation.

The first report published in 2017 highlighted a still forthcoming Inter-Ministerial Group designed to 'drive work across government to promote sport and physical activity and make it more widely accessible.'²⁰

However, there is evidence that the Government's ambition to lead a fully joined-up sports policy that reaches the grassroots has not yet been realised. Excerpts from submissions taken by the CSJ indicate that some grassroots sport organisations are not satisfied with the current level of collaboration between government departments. Nonetheless, the submissions also demonstrate a strong appetite in the sector to help the Government achieve a more concerted implementation of the strategy.

We are yet to feel a more cross-departmental approach...

"From our perspective – as an organisation delivering sport for development programmes within mainstream secondary schools, special educational needs schools, and community sports clubs throughout London – we are yet to see, or feel, a more cross-departmental approach to government support for sport or sport for development.

²⁰ HM Government, *Sporting Future: First Annual Report*, Feb 2017 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590578/Sporting_Future_-_first_annual_report_final.pdf]

We continue to receive funding from Sport England. However, we are yet to see evidence of the 'new and more joined-up approach to delivery and funding' proposed by DCMS's *Sporting Future* (p.12).

Our organisation would welcome further engagement with relevant government departments such as DfE and DH, not merely with a view to funding (although this is important for us), but to explore opportunities for meaningful partnership and collaboration. Due to our existing infrastructure within target communities; access to particular demographic groups; and ability to evidence impact across a range of social outcomes, we believe we are well placed to support a number of government departments, beyond DCMS to achieve their strategic objectives."

Submission from a grassroots sport organisation

Success remains to be seen...

"[The strategy's success] remains to be seen. Sport England are distributing money to a lot more organisations in an effort to meet the aims of the strategy. It will take time to see if this has a positive effect on disadvantaged communities.

The strategy was hailed as a Government strategy but I am afraid it looks like a DCMS and Department of Health strategy with no input from [the] Home Office, Department for Education or the Treasury."

Submission from a grassroots sport organisation

We would like to see more jointly-agreed policy...

“We would like to see an increased focus on different government department’s working collaboratively to ensure sport for social transformation achieves its full potential. This work should include for example:

Working together to jointly agree and set out the variety of outcomes that sport can deliver at the same time for different departments.

Working with their respective funders to create funding pots/ streams to fund delivery at a local level.

This would encourage a more holistic and less siloed approach to issues (much like the troubled families unit was attempting) by government and make it so much more effective for organisations to attract and deliver social mobility for disadvantaged young people.”

Submission from a grassroots sport organisation

Further, the Government has perhaps missed opportunities where sport could have been integrated more deeply into the policy agendas of different departments. The Sport and Recreation Alliance have highlighted, for example, that the plan to improve mental health support, launched by the Prime Minister in January 2017, made no mention of the positive role that sport and physical activity can play.²¹

21 Sport and Reaction Alliance, ‘Government must recognise physical activity can help solve mental health crisis’, 9 Oct 2017 [accessed via: www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/blogs/emma-boggis/Government%20must%20recognise%20physical%20activity%20can%20help%20solve%20mental%20health%20crisis]

Low levels of investment in youth centres also suggest that embedding sport and physical activity into the hearts of communities through collaboration between central and local government has not yet been made a priority. One report has shown that more than thirty youth centres in London have closed since 2011 as councils have cut £36 million of funding on youth services.²² At least 12,700 places for young people have been lost in the process.²³

However, other respondents commended changes in the way government departments collaborate since the strategy was introduced in 2015, though also noted that it was too early to tell precisely how far this had translated into socially transformative outcomes.

The strategy is having a positive impact on health and wellbeing...

“It’s still in the early stages to really demonstrate the impact that the strategy wanted to have with regards to impacting on social transformation. There has been an increase in people participating in sport and physical activity.

Cross department working seems to be rolling out well and is having a positive impact in areas such as health and wellbeing with regards to new projects starting.”

Submission from a grassroots sport organisation

22 S Berry, *London’s lost youth services*, Jan 2017 [accessed via: www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_lost_youth_services_sian_berry_jan2017.pdf]

23 Ibid

Funding grassroots sport

Sport England is the executive non-departmental public body that funds sports organisations and schemes using money from DCMS as well as the National Lottery.

In May 2016, it published *Towards an Active Nation*, a five-year strategy supporting the aims outlined in the Government's *Sporting Future*, and committed to 'prioritise demographic groups who are currently under-represented in terms of their engagement with sport and physical activity'.²⁴

Many respondents commended this change of focus.

Steps in the right direction...

"We felt that the extension of Sport England's remit to cover children and young people from the age of five and above rather than fourteen; the move to focus resources on the 'inactive' as well as those groups currently under-represented in sport participation; and the re-defining of what success looks like from participation for its own sake, to the social outcomes that can be achieved through sport and physical activity, were all steps in the right direction."

Submission from a grassroots sport organisation

²⁴ Sport England, *Toward and Active Nation: Strategy 2016–2021*, May 2016 [accessed via: www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf]

Sport England has created a £120 million fund to tackle inactivity over the next four years, and recently launched a £3 million investment specifically designed to get poorer communities active.²⁵ To do this, Sport England have pledged to work with the grassroots organisations ‘who really understand the people we want to reach and support’, even if those organisations have not previously had experience in providing sport or physical activities.²⁶

These investments constitute part of its commitment to put at least 25 per cent (£265 million) of its total resources into tackling inactivity over the five-year strategy.²⁷

This, however, falls short of the 29 per cent of Sport England’s spending designated to sport’s ‘core market’ – that is, those who already ‘have a strong affinity for sport – including the highly valuable but small-scale talent pool’.²⁸

While Sport England should be commended for targeting more funds to social transformation and improving activity among the disadvantaged than in the past,²⁹ respondents frequently highlighted the issue of inadequate funding; both in terms of Sport England’s funding priorities, and the way funding is channelled.

25 Sport England, *Tackling Inactivity and Economic Disadvantage Prospectus*, Sep 2017 [accessed via: www.sportengland.org/media/12313/tackling-inactivity-and-economic-disadvantage-prospectus.pdf]

26 Ibid

27 Sport England, *Toward and Active Nation: Strategy 2016–2021*, May 2016 [accessed via: www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf]

28 Ibid

29 See p.19

Competing for a limited budget...

“...Sport England has a limited budget derived from DCMS from which to continue to fund its core market while also achieving the social outcomes demanded by this new strategy. Those established sport for development organisations ... that have the most capacity to help Sport England deliver their new strategy – because of existing access to under-represented groups and focus on achieving and evidencing social outcomes – must compete for access to this limited funding budget.

In order for the extensive network of grassroots sport and sport for development organisations to achieve their potential for delivering transformative social outcomes, there needs to be greater engagement, support and funding from Government. This should not only derive from DCMS, but as Sporting Future suggests, from departments across Whitehall working in collaboration (to maximise resource and funding potential).”

Submission from a grassroots sport organisation

The move towards boosting activity among the disadvantaged is a welcome departure from the preoccupation with elite sport which flowed naturally from the success of London 2012.

However, it remains the case that being physically active and participating in sport has not yet become the norm for all. Some 20 million people are not meeting the Government's recommendations for physical activity – and therefore missing out on the health, social and emotional benefits sport can bring.³⁰

But it is the poorest who are missing out the most.

In 2015 Sport England recorded a discrepancy of 25.9 per cent to 39.1 per cent between lower and higher socio-economic groups respectively in weekly sports participation.³¹

Alarming, the Active Lives Survey published in October 2017 shows that the socio-economic gap has not yet closed (with 10.4 percentage points between the same groups),³² despite the metric having changed from 'weekly sports participation' to the much more inclusive 'activity'.

Clearly there is still a way to go for the life-changing potential of sport to be fully unlocked.

30 British Heart Foundation, *Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Report 2017*, Mar 2017 [accessed via: www.bhf.org.uk/publications/statistics/physical-inactivity-report-2017]

31 Sport England, *Active People Survey 9* [accessed via Active People Interactive, <http://activepeople.sportengland.org>]. Here, 'lower groups' are comprised of survey respondents in NS SEC categories 8–5, and 'higher groups' comprised of NS SEC categories 4–1

32 CSJ analysis of Sport England, *Sport and Physical Activity Levels amongst adults aged 16+*, Oct 2017, Table 1 [accessed via: www.sportengland.org/media/12451/tables-1-4_levels-of-activity.xlsx]

The roundtable: reaching the grassroots

Our roundtable drew a range of experts, and put representatives from grassroots sports networks in front of Sports Minister Tracey Crouch MP and Sport England to discuss how *Sporting Future* can maximise its chances of success.

Attendees were presented with the submissions taken by the CSJ and solicited to review the strategy at the present stage of implementation. As the issue was repeatedly raised in the submissions, particular emphasis was placed on discussing cross-departmental aspects of the strategy – and senior civil servants and advisors from DCLG, DH and the MOJ were invited to explore the ways that sport for social good could be more effectively integrated across government.

National Governing Bodies

The first subject discussed by attendees was the impact of the sports strategy on the national governing bodies of sport (NGBs). NGBs are responsible for managing their specific sport – from the Football Association to the Tug of War Association – and oversee the relevant rules, regulations, clubs, and tournaments.³³

Importantly, NGBs also decide how the income generated by membership fees, lottery grants and funding from the Government and the four

³³ For the full list of NGBs recognised by Sport England, see: www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-governing-bodies/sports-that-we-recognise/

UK Sports Councils is spent. Attendees highlighted the longstanding social and cultural role of NGBs, with some bodies having existed for over a hundred years to 'protect, define and hold onto what they consider precious' about the way their sport is played – and by whom.

In *Sporting Future* and *Towards an Active Nation*, the Government and Sport England respectively set out more rigorous measures encouraging NGBs to bring their funding strategies in line with the aims of engaging communities and groups less likely to be active.

Attendees were broadly in consensus that this aspect of the strategy has led to a significant and positive change in direction, and has encouraged, if not entirely mandated, a 'distinct change of behaviour' in the ways NGBs operate. The new generation of employees and volunteers that have been recruited for their expertise in engaging disadvantaged communities was hailed for its potential to create a long-term 'sustainable change to support the strategy'.

Yet questions remained over the extent to which NGBs were committed to the strategy's aims. It was noted that Sport England's reduction in 'core' sport expenditure (from 38 per cent in 2012–16 to 29 per cent in 2017–21)³⁴ to release funds for raising activity levels had not been welcomed by some NGBs.

Others found that certain NGBs have seen themselves principally as the 'custodians' of their sport, and have therefore been slow to see social transformation as falling within their remit – preferring 'sport for sporty people in more advantaged areas of the country'.

34 Sport England, *Toward and Active Nation: Strategy 2016–2021*, May 2016 [accessed via: www.sportengland.org/media/10629/sport-england-towards-an-active-nation.pdf]

However, it was also emphasised that there are positive examples of where NGBs have effectively adapted to the aims of the strategy. In particular, the Rugby Football Union (RFU) was cited as an NGB that had, through its Try for Change programme, successfully partnered with grassroots charities using ‘sport to change lives’.

In September 2017 the RFU announced 11 partnership projects, awarding small rugby charities up to £10,000 to help refugees integrate into society, reduce reoffending and improve the health and wellbeing of people in disadvantaged communities through the sport.³⁵ A large grants programme offering up to £100,000 for charities working towards similar aims was launched in August 2017, and will be awarded in January 2018.³⁶

Attendees also commended Sport England’s increased propensity to work with more dynamic organisations, able to take sport ‘much deeper and further into a community than any NGB has ever done’. Highlighted as a representative example of this change was its strengthened partnership with StreetGames – a charity and network of over 600 ‘Doorstep Sport’ organisations in disadvantaged communities.

The capacity to use sport for social good both resourcefully and responsively was demonstrated, though in tragic circumstances, in the weeks after the Grenfell Tower disaster, where StreetGames

35 RFU, ‘Try for Change small grants projects announced’, Press Release, 5 Sep 2017 [accessed via: www.englandrugby.com/news/try-for-change-small-grants-projects-announced/]

36 RFU, ‘Try for Change large grants programme announced’, Press Release, 22 Aug 2017 [accessed via: www.englandrugby.com/news/try-for-change-large-grants-programme-announced/]

was able to raise £54,000 from Sport England and £30,000 from the Greater London Authority to deliver a ‘supported summer’ programme through six local sports organisations in its network.³⁷

Attendees suggested that a closer partnership between NGBs and grassroots networks, such as Sported’s 3000 community sport groups and the CSJ’s Alliance of poverty-fighting charities, could help broker the relationships that would direct resources to the right organisations.

Measuring impact

Measuring the impact of sport, beyond simply the number of participants, was a key feature of the changes brought about in *Sporting Future*, and the issue of accurate measurement was frequently raised in the roundtable’s discussion.³⁸ The debate centred on two key points of consideration: whether there are social objectives missing from the strategy; and how data should be collected to gauge progress at the grassroots level.

Discussing objectives, attendees highlighted a point made in submission to the CSJ, which argued that the question should not be about which social objectives are missing from existing ‘sports policy’, but the role sport can play in supporting a wide range of policy aims.

Several attendees agreed that greater joining-up of government, including the use of a common outcomes framework, would

37 StreetGames, Board Meeting Minutes, 6 Jul 2017 [accessed via: www.streetgames.org/sites/default/files/Item%203%20-%20Board%20Minutes%206th%20July%2017.docx]

38 HM Government, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, Dec 2015 [www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation]

strengthen the case for increased funding for sport in the budgets of different departments.

There was disagreement, however, on precisely how further integration should look.

Some attendees pointed towards the DWP's Innovation Fund, a three-year £30 million pilot launched in 2012 funding payment-by-results programmes which helped disadvantaged young people succeed in education and training.³⁹ The Fund's 'attempt at joint commissioning' between DWP and DfE was offered as a potentially replicable and scalable model.

Others emphasised that, before joined-up commissioning is possible, there is need for a common economic model to provide evidence of the financial savings, as well as the social impact, of sport across different departments. This could demonstrate the savings generated through, for instance, reduced reoffending or lifted pressure on the NHS, and help identify areas where 'tangible interventions' should be made.

Recent research published by ukactive estimates that community leisure in the UK contributes £3.3bn a year in 'social value', taking into account the improved health, reduced crime, increased educational attainment and improved life satisfaction it generates.⁴⁰

39 See: DWP, *Qualitative evaluation of the DWP's Innovation Fund: Final report*, Jul 2016 [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/535032/rr922-qualitative-evaluation-of-the-dwp-innovation-fund-final-report.pdf]

40 ukactive, *Physical activity: A social solution*, Nov 2017 [accessed via: www.ukactive.com/stream.asp?stream=true&eid=9334&node=734&checksum=473024CC5145B0D0EF6603574510319C]

It was argued that it was possible for the model used to calculate sport's social value in the research (developed by the Sport Industry Research Centre of Sheffield Hallam University with support from DCMS and Sport England) to be adopted by many different government departments.

Attendees also stressed, however, that robust evidence for success at the grassroots level is notoriously patchy. Practical limits to good data – including squeezed resources, high staff turnover, and inexperience in data collection – were all cited as reasons why it can be hard for even the best grassroots sport programmes to justify the investment of public money.

The funding priority

Attendees explored the implications of the strategy on the sports funding landscape. Some criticised what they considered to be persistent funding inequalities in spite of the strategy's progress, and others focused on how new recipients of funding have been encouraged since *Sporting Future* and *Towards an Active Nation* were introduced.

As mentioned previously, Sport England currently allocates a quarter of its funds to programmes specifically aimed at tackling inactivity and designates 29 per cent for supporting core sport.⁴¹ This arrangement, some attendees argued, remained insufficiently targeted towards the goal of raising activity levels among disadvantaged members of society:

⁴¹ See p.15

I love sport... Historically, Sport England has funded the people already playing sport. My view is that none of the money should go to them, because I believe that I would play all sports whether someone funded me or not...

It was also argued that the funding generated from lottery grants came primarily from the pockets of lower socio-economic groups (who are statistically more likely to buy lottery tickets),⁴² but was not redistributed fairly to sports engaging these groups (who are also more likely to be inactive).

Other attendees, however, highlighted the significant change in direction made by Sport England in 2016 compared to the clear prioritisation of 'core' and elite sport markets in the years prior. It was stressed that there has been a major shift in the direction of funding, but that it remained challenging to engage grassroots organisations lacking any 'sort of track record [or] some sort of governance' as this made it very difficult to 'prove they can handle public money'.

Nonetheless, progress had been observed in the types of organisations supported by Sport England, as widened eligibility has encouraged prospective recipients of funding to be more creative and entrepreneurial. In this new landscape, for example, organisations that would 'never have been funded' before the strategy's introduction have been awarded money, such as Our Parks – an innovative scheme providing free exercise classes led by qualified instructors in local parks, in partnership with local councils.

42 Theos, *The National Lottery: Is it Progressive?*, Jul 2009 [accessed via: www.theosthinktank.co.uk/files/files/Reports/NationalLotteryreport.pdf]

Also discussed was the changing role that private investment and philanthropy can play in supporting grassroots sport as brands seek increasingly to associate with social value:⁴³

There's a new sponsorship model that's emerging based around an increased focus on social outcomes... but it will be more successful if insight and data are shared.

The need for an accurate measure of outcomes was therefore recognised to apply equally in relation to private and philanthropic investments as to government and lottery funding.

Activation

'Activation' – that is, the transformation of an inactive lifestyle into an active one – constituted a central plank of the Government's sports strategy. The roundtable demonstrated, however, that there remains lively debate over exactly how the activation of particularly inactive communities should be achieved.

The key to successful activation, some argued, is by interpreting 'sport' less through its conventional competitive framework than as 'normal' physical activity. The attitude taken by Chris Boardman, Greater Manchester's first Walking and Cycling Commissioner and former Olympic champion, was highlighted as an example of this. Responding to his position being labelled as 'for cyclists', Boardman said:

⁴³ See: CSJ, *Everyone's Business: Making Business Work for All*, Dec 16 [accessed via: www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Business-report-FINAL-011216.pdf]

My job as I see it is not actually for ‘cyclists’ – it’s for normal people in normal clothes doing normal things, getting from A to B and using bikes...⁴⁴

Attendees suggested that the ‘people on bikes’ approach could be extended to a wide variety of sports to normalise activity and improve individuals’ relationships with sport. Attendees were reminded that while ‘[g]ood sport is good ... bad sport is terrible’, and being ‘last to be picked in the playground’ can seriously damage a person’s relationship with physical activity.

Recent research conducted at Middlesex University has shown that negative experiences of physical education at school can deter individuals from exercise late into adult life.⁴⁵

For sports coaching, therefore, some attendees argued that the strategy should necessarily prioritise the development of coaches able to motivate and engage hard-to-reach groups, regardless as to whether they already hold a high-level proficiency in their sport.

Illustrating the point, one attendee described a programme that had evolved organically one summer in Newham, London. A group of teenagers who had taken a three-hour basic course in tennis set up a summer tennis camp for nine to 10-year olds with the simple aim of enthusing them with the game – initially by setting small targets

44 Mayor Andy Burhman (@MayorofGM), ‘We’re about to become the UK’s leading city for cycling – with help from new walking and cycling commissioner @Chris_Boardman! #GMMoving’, Tweet: 28 Jul 2017 [accessed via: <https://twitter.com/MayorofGM/status/890964996934467584>]

45 A Elliot, *A multi-method investigation into physical activity in middle-age through a lifecourse perspective*, PhD thesis, Middlesex University, Jul 2017 [accessed via: <http://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/22163/1/AElliot%20thesis.pdf>]

like 'getting the ball over the net' or 'successfully hitting four shots'. Having caused a minor sensation with 150–200 children coming to play everyday, the attendee described, a 'group of qualified coaches visited ... and it took them about a quarter of an hour to suck all of the joy out of it'.

Other attendees, however, argued that you can't 'have a coach after two minutes, or two hours', because if 'we're going to do sport, like when we're doing anything, we should do it well'. Yet the traditional emphasis on technical proficiency and qualifications remained viewed as the other 'extreme'. Finding the balance, therefore, between engagement and sporting expertise was viewed as key.

Some also warned that altering the standard of coaching too far in the pursuit of activating disadvantaged communities could inadvertently create a two-tier system, with 'an underclass of fun sport [and] NGBs catering for the more affluent' without being linked in any way.

Attendees also emphasised the importance of not only limiting negative experiences but also creating positive and educational experiences of sport at a young age, therefore beginning an early process of activation. Currently, around 60 per cent of adults are unaware of the Government's physical activity guidelines.⁴⁶ When you have 'a captive audience from the age of four', one attendee argued, 'getting them to love physical activity' and understand the benefits of sport is 'essential' for the long-term success of the strategy.

46 British Heart Foundation, *Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Report 2017*, Mar 2017 [accessed via: www.bhf.org.uk/publications/statistics/physical-inactivity-report-2017]

Delivering the sports strategy across Whitehall

The success of *Sporting Future*, according to the strategy itself, is dependent on the ‘universal agreement across all Whitehall departments about [its aims], and a shared commitment to delivering it’.⁴⁷ Attendees offered insights into where departments beyond DCMS have utilised sport in pursuit of socially transformative aims, and where this shared commitment was in evidence.

For example, ‘family sport’ sessions provided by grassroots organisations had been used as an intervention to prevent or heal family breakdown through the Troubled Families programme. Some local authorities have also provided twelve-week lifestyle coaching programmes for struggling families, where health is monitored, physical activity encouraged and subsidised gym membership offered.

In the criminal justice system, the previously mentioned work of the RFU in prisons was cited as a successful programme that had been supported by the MoJ. Justice Minister Dr Phillip Lee MP was also commended for his personal commitment to the potential of sport for social transformation. In September 2017, the MoJ commissioned new research on sport and youth justice, and the Minister has outlined plans to: rebalance sport in the youth justice curriculum alongside Maths and English; provide prison governors with greater powers to ‘enable this type of activity more regularly and on a greater scale’; and encourage more sports clubs to work

47 HM Government, *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*, Dec 2015 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/publications/sporting-future-a-new-strategy-for-an-active-nation]

with young offenders in custody and continue to support them when they leave.⁴⁸

Attendees also highlighted areas with potential for great collaboration over sport. For example, the planned 'healthy rating scheme' for primary schools first announced in the Department of Health's 2016 childhood obesity strategy provides ample opportunity for further integration of the sports strategy across DfE, DH and DCMS.⁴⁹ Forthcoming CSJ research on childhood obesity outlines a comprehensive plan for government departments to work together to tackle the alarming prevalence of childhood obesity.

Attendees also offered reasons for why submissions taken by the CSJ often suggested that cross-government collaboration is not yet being seen, or indeed 'felt', by grassroots sport organisations.

It was argued that DCMS should be making more of a visible case for sport across government to begin conversations over the role physical activity can play in the different departments' policy programmes. However, some attendees argued that effective cross-government collaboration has only been implemented in the past with the direct leadership of Downing Street and the Cabinet Office, citing the example of the recent Race Disparity Audit, which examined 'how people of different backgrounds are treated across areas including health, education, employment and the criminal justice system'.⁵⁰

48 www.gov.uk/government/speeches/justice-minister-dr-phillip-lees-speech-at-youth-justice-convention

49 DH, *Childhood Obesity: A Plan of Action*, 2016 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/546588/Childhood_obesity_2016__2__acc.pdf]

50 Cabinet Office, *Race Disparity Audit: Summary Findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures Website*, Oct 2017 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650723/RDAweb.pdf]

Compounding the need for leadership at the top of government is the fact that ‘ministers are rather fluid’, and their commitment to the potential of sport can commonly be driven by experiences or beliefs personal to them.

Yet key to the discussion about the cross-departmental nature of the strategy was the issue of financing sport for social good. The need for a more joined-up approach to measuring, budgeting, and consequently commissioning (as discussed on p.22–4), it was argued, is vital to the to delivery of *Sporting Future* across Whitehall – and ensuring that funding reaches the grassroots.

Moving forward

By facilitating an open conversation across government about the power of sport, our roundtable rekindled some of the excitement and unity symbolised by the ten ministerial forewords beginning each chapter of the consultation that would become *Sporting Future*.⁵¹ And by linking sports organisations from the grassroots with the corridors of power, the case was powerfully made that it must be those on the frontline who are championed if we are to achieve the strategy's most transformative outcomes.

But the need for an effective sports strategy is urgent, particularly for those struggling the most, and so the CSJ is calling on the Government to consider five key areas of ambitious reform:

1. The funding priority

The 'core sport' market, primarily maintained through the funding of NGBs, remains the principal beneficiary of the government and lottery investment channelled through Sport England. Recent and admirable advances have been made rerouting funds towards the aim of raising activity levels. However, given the seriousness of how low activity levels remain in England, and the persisting disparity between the engagement of the poorest and the affluent, Sport England should be much more ambitious in prioritising its funding outlay towards improving activity among lower socio-economics groups.

51 DCMS, *A New Strategy for Sport: Consultation Paper*, Aug 2015 [accessed via: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/450712/1619-F_Sports_Strategy_ACCESSIBLE.pdf]

2. After 'activation'

Submission respondents highlighted that, like the previous preoccupation with sports 'participation', the current emphasis on 'activity' is also limited in that it does not fully represent the many social and emotional benefits to be gained from organised sport. The CSJ supports the current strategy to improve activity levels; however, its longer-term trajectory should be aimed towards widening the availability of organised sport participation for disadvantaged members of society.

3. A common outcomes framework

Attendees repeatedly raised inconsistent evidence and the lack of a common outcomes framework as preclusive to the 'whole-government' approach of the original strategy. The Government should develop a common outcomes framework that would serve to justify the increasingly regular (and joined-up) commissioning of sports-related policy interventions in the budgets of different departments.

4. Further collaboration

The Government should utilise the examples outlined in this paper to enhance cross-department collaboration, and use the forthcoming Inter-Ministerial Group on Healthy Living to identify further areas where sport can contribute to the shared and interconnected policy objectives of different departments.

5. A radical new funding model

The Government should also consider whether an altogether different funding model could be more suited to the pursuit of the strategy's aims. A new body, modelled on the role of a 'clearing house' and existing solely for the purpose of investing in sport for social transformation, could perform more effectively at engaging the hardest to reach groups while also working symbiotically with Sport England's wider aims. The clearing house would partner with grassroots and doorstep sport networks – using the trust and impact measurement they have developed with smaller organisations in deprived communities – to ensure that funds were being invested solely for this purpose. With the clearing house's clearer focus, and a new common outcomes framework, the body could attract funds from different or combined government departments to help achieve specific policy aims. Further, the trust the body would accrue by focusing exclusively on social impact rather than 'affluent sport' would also be likely to attract more of the significant amount of private capital that donors and brands are increasingly willing to invest in social value.



Putting social justice at the heart of British politics

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