DRIVING UP PARTICIPATION: THE CHALLENGE FOR SPORT

ACADEMIC REVIEW PAPERS COMMISSIONED BY SPORT ENGLAND AS CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS TO INFORM THE PREPARATION OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR SPORT IN ENGLAND

SPORT ENGLAND, APRIL 2004

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In the early part of 2003 when the idea for this academic seminar started to first take shape Sport England had already picked up the gauntlet posed in Game Plan, the joint Strategy Unit and DCMS report to start modernising its own organisation and to take a strategic lead for sport in England. We had already commissioned The Henley Centre to help us to engage the key stakeholders in sport in the development of a new Framework for Sport in England that would create a common sense of purpose and strategic direction for sport. But it was becoming increasingly clear that we must involve in a more direct and focused way the strong academic community we have in England.

The idea to gather together in one room a select group of eminent academics from across the United Kingdom alongside some of the most influential policy makers in sport to challenge our thinking and help us shape our strategic approach was considered by some to be a risky venture. The outcome, as represented in the collection of papers included in this publication has, however, fully vindicated the wisdom of that decision.

At the time of writing this foreword in April 2004 Sport England has made significant progress in its modernisation programme to become an organisation fit to lead sport in the 21st Century. We have just published the National Framework for Sport in England and the 9 Regional Plans that will drive implementation will be published over the next three months followed in 2004/5 by the preparation of 'Whole Sport Plans' with each of the 20 priority sports. With the publication of these plans, and with the extensive analysis of the evidence base and consultation with key stakeholders that preceded it, we believe we have made the first and most important step on the road towards achieving unprecedented increases in participation in sport and levels of success on the international stage not witnessed for generations.

The thinking that underpinned the content of the papers that emerged from the seminar has been influential in informing the debate with the thousands of stakeholders that have since been consulted as part of the strategy formulation process. As a consequence many of the recommendations embedded in the collection of papers that follows have found their way into the final recommendations in the Framework for Sport in England that will influence the direction of sports policy for many years to come.

The brief given to those academics invited to submit papers was, as is often the way, on the face of it a very simple question but one with no simple answer - *'How can we drive up participation rates in sport and physical activity?'* The context for this question is explored in two papers that I had written with colleagues at Sport England that slightly pre-date the seminar and were circulated to the academic participants as part of their brief. For completeness these papers have been included in this publication as they provide useful contextual evidence that informs the debate that follows.

The situation in which we find ourselves is that participation rates have remained stubbornly static and inequities in participation between different social groups have continued largely unchanged over the last 30 years or so

with perhaps the exception of more women taking part in fitness related activities. There are significant and growing numbers of people who live their lives in a sedentary ways that were unheard of in previous generations.

The costs to society and to individuals from sedentary behaviours are growing to the point where it is becoming a major public policy concern. Obesity levels in England are increasing year-on-year and are tracking those in the USA, rates of coronary heart disease although decreasing remain high, Type II Diabetes is on the increase with prevalence growing amongst younger populations and osteoporosis is becoming increasingly prevalent particularly amongst older women.

The scientific evidence that increased levels of physical activity can bring wide-ranging health benefits is now compelling. Sport together with walking can make a major contribution to increasing overall levels of physical activity but only by breaking out of traditional ways of thinking and silo mentalities.

What is clear from the evidence to date is that to be successful in achieving our vision of making England an active and successful sporting nation we need to intervene in more sophisticated and socially relevant ways than we have in the past. In order to overcome the barriers both real and perceived that reinforce inactive behaviour patterns we need to better connect interventions to promote sport and physical activity with people's motivations, their lifestyle preferences and with the realities of their day-to-day life circumstances

The papers included in this publication raise wide-ranging and challenging issues for public policy and practice. Although often critical of what has gone before they all offer up positive insights into what must be done in the future. I am not going to attempt to summarise those insights and different readers will pick up different thoughts to take away with them. But I can assure you that in the pages that follow there is a wealth of facts and figures about sport in England and even more importantly a wealth of ideas and observations that can make a very real and practical difference to the future of planning policy and delivery in this country.

Nick Rowe
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Driving up participation: The challenge for Sport

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The challenges and future prospects for Sport

Driving up participation in sport: the social context, the trends, the prospects and the challenges

Nick Rowe, Ryan Adams and Neil Beasley, Sport England

Introduction

This paper examines the key trends in sports participation in England and places them in the broader context of social and demographic change. In doing so we can examine the challenge Sport England will face if it is to achieve the kinds of targets that are now being considered in its business plan and associated Funding Agreement with the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS).

In seeking to identify 'where we have been', 'where we are now' and 'where we would like to get to' we make no apologies for being selective in our reference to the evidence. Other papers have explored in detail the 'social landscape of sport' and it is not the intention to repeat them here. In addition, this paper complements one prepared by the same authors on '*Sport, physical activity and health: future prospects for improving the health of the nation'*. In combination the two papers provide a wide-ranging perspective on sports participation, physical activity and health benefits.

The focus of this paper is on:

Where are we now – is sports participation in England increasing and becoming more diverse or decreasing and become narrower in its social profile? This section examines the evidence on levels of participation and club membership in the population and how this varies across different social groups. It looks at regional variations and where people take part in sport.

The broader social context – what are the key drivers pushing up or pulling down sports participation over the next 20 years. In this section we look at some of the broader social and demographic trends that are likely to impact on sports participation – either positively or negatively.

Facing up to the challenge – and making a difference. In this section we examine possible targets for increasing the levels and diversity of participation in sport and look at the challenges this will entail. We suggest that public policy intervention in sport will 'need to go where we have never been before' if we are to drive up participation and realise our vision of making England a successful sporting nation.

Definitions

Throughout where reference is made to participation in sport it is based on the wide definition of sport agreed by the Council of Europe:

"Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels."
(Council of Europe, European Sports Charter, 1993)

This definition of sport extends far beyond traditional team games to incorporate individual sports and fitness related activities such as aerobics and certain dance activities, as well as recreational activities such as long walks and cycling. It extends from casual and informal participation to more serious organised club sport, and for the minority involves complete commitment in pursuit of the highest levels of excellence at Olympic and World level. This wide and inclusive definition of sport extends its relevance to the whole population and its value as a significant player in the broader social agenda.

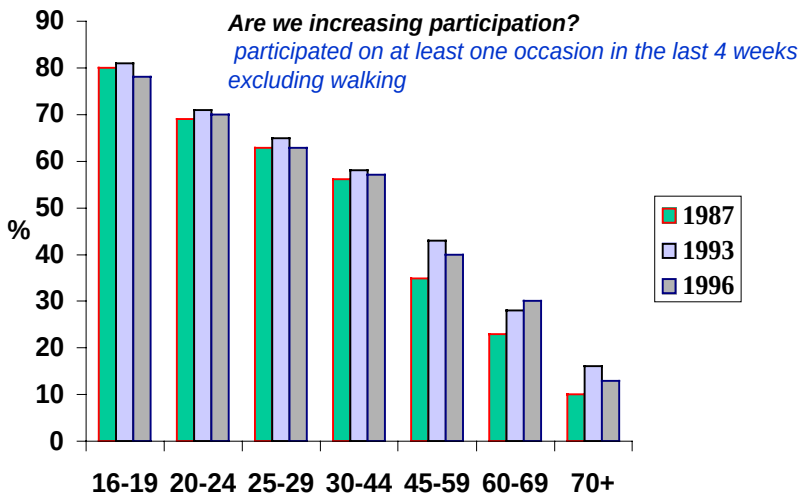
In its surveys of sports participation (whether with young people or adults) respondents are able to select from a long list of sport and recreational activities so that the measure is consistent with the Council of Europe definition. Walking (defined by having walked two miles or more) is included in the surveys but is often reported separately. In this paper the indicator of 'participation in sport' excludes walking. In the paper focusing on the contribution sport makes to physical activity and health the definition includes walking.

In its commissioned surveys (including the General Household Survey questions on sport – see Sport England/UK Sport 1999) Sport England does not measure intensity and duration of activity (these were measured in the Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey 1990 and the physical activity components of the 1994 and 1998 Health Surveys for England). It does however measure frequency of participation either referenced to the last and or to the last 4 weeks. For many years the standard definition of adult participation in sport used by Sport England was 'at least once in the previous 4 weeks'. More recently however we have changed the standard definition to a more demanding one of 'at least 4 times in the previous 4 weeks' (the equivalent of once a week) as this provides a more meaningful measure of commitment to sport.

Where are we now – is sports participation increasing and becoming more diverse or decreasing and becoming narrower in its social profile?

The evidence we have points towards stagnation in the levels of participation in sport during the 1990's. Figure 1 shows the levels of participation by adults in different age groups and how this has changed between 1987 and 1996. Only those in the 60 to 69 years age group experienced a significant and consistent increase over the period. All other age groups some decrease albeit it slight between 1993 and 1996. This decline in participation by 16 to 19 year olds was particularly disappointing given the significant public policy commitment over that period by the then English Sports Council and its partners to drive up interest and commitment to sport by young people.

Figure1: Participation in sports, games and physical activities *(excluding walking), at least one occasion past 4 weeks*



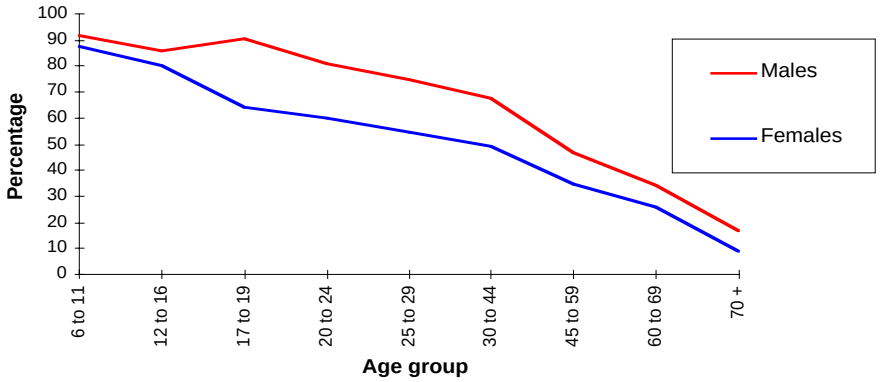
Source: GHS 1987, 1993, 1996

In addition to showing the lack of overall progress in driving up participation Figure 1 also demonstrates the steep gradient in drop off in participation with age despite some gains in participation by the older age groups.

The 1980's and 1990's saw significant increases in participation by women driven mainly by greater interest in keep fit type activities including swimming rather than outdoor activities and 'traditional team sports'. However as demonstrated by Figure 2 the profile of sports participants in England in the mid 1990s still showed significant gender differences with men much more likely to take part than women. Figure 3 shows that this gender difference is found in all the English regions although it is much greater in the less affluent North East region than for example in the more affluent South East.

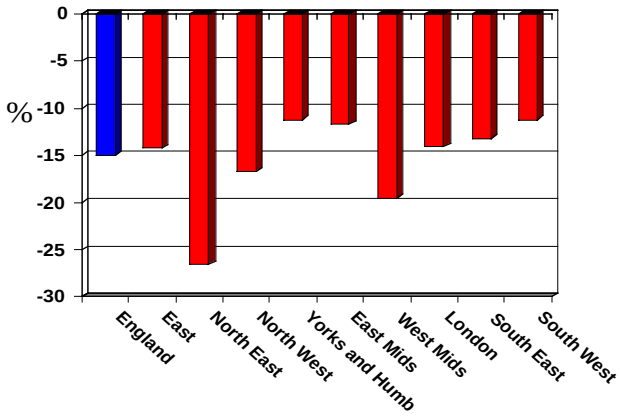
A number of ethnic minority groups have lower participation rates than the national average of 46% taking part on at least one occasion in the previous 4 weeks. Thirty nine percent of the Black Caribbean and Indian populations take part in sport at this level of frequency while even smaller proportions of Pakistani (31%) and Bangladeshis (30%) do so. Sport England's national survey of ethnicity and sport carried out in 1999 (Sport England, 2000) also showed that the gender differences in participation were greater amongst most ethnic minority groups than in the population as a whole and most marked in the Asian populations.

Figure 2: Participation in sports, games and physical activities *(excluding walking), at least one occasion past 4 weeks,* (% of population aged 6+ yrs)



Source: GHS 1996

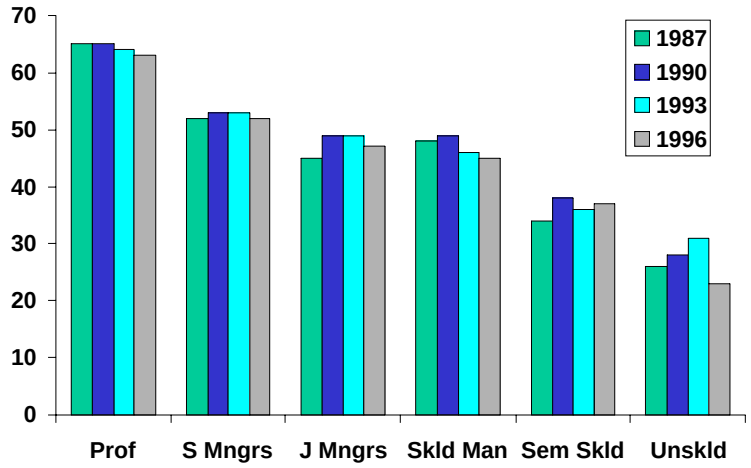
Figure 3: The difference between female and male participation i n sport in the English regions 1996



Took part in sport (16 plus) at least once in previous 4 weeks (excluding walking) 1996 GHS

The evidence on the social class of participants (see Figure 4) demonstrates that participation is significantly skewed towards the professional groups and that these social inequities have not become any less significant over recent years. In 1996 those classified in the 'Professional' social class group were still about three times more likely to participate in sport than those classified as 'Unskilled Manual'.

Figure 4: Social class differences in participation 1987 to 1996

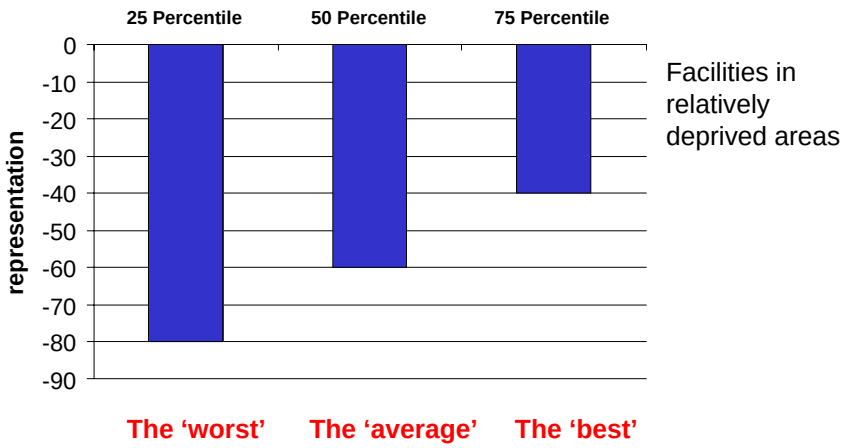


Participated on at least one occasion in last 4 weeks excluding walking

Source: GHS, 1987 to 1996

It is interesting to explore the social class differences in the context of local authority provision. Throughout the 1990s most, if not all, local authorities have had policies to widen participation and make inroads into social inequity through their own provision of community sports facilities. These have often been backed up by concessionary schemes targeted at certain social groups and have invariably have required substantial subsidies from the public purse. Yet in Sport England's 1997 survey of over 150 local authority sports halls and swimming pools in England (Sport England, 1999) we found that the vast majority significantly under-represented those classified in the DE social groups compared with the numbers in their catchments. Figure 5 shows how even the 'best performing' facilities under-represented DE social groups by 40% when comparing their user profile with the social profile of their catchment population (Sport England, 2000a).

Figure 5: Local Authority Halls and Pools
% of DEs using the facility divided by the % of DEs in the catchment population



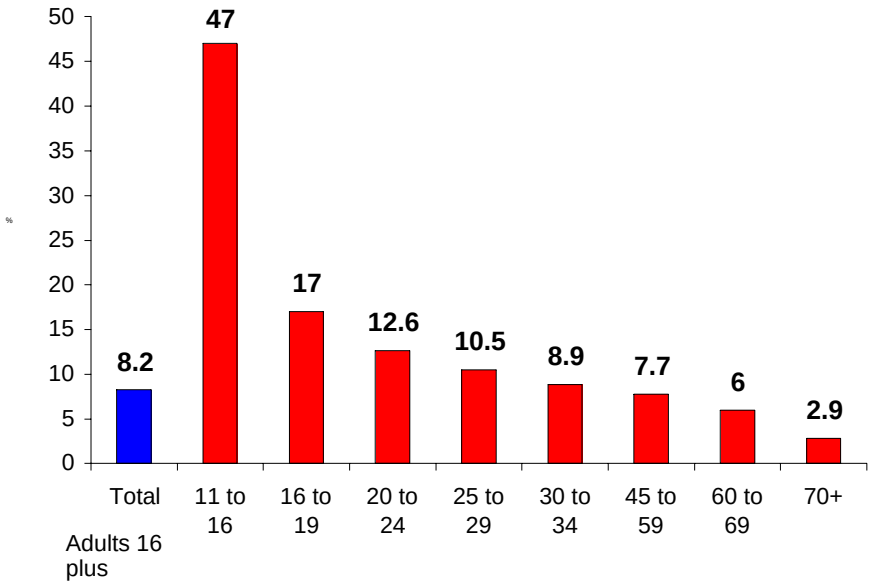
Sports clubs have the potential to play an important role in the provision of sporting opportunities. They can make the link between organised sport in school and in the community; provide the strong social ties that sustain participation into later life; provide opportunities for structured competition and performance improvement; and for those with the desire and talent they can provide the pathway into elite sport and high level performance. In some European countries, notably Germany, Sweden and The Netherlands sports clubs have a wide participation base that extends across social groups and

provide opportunities into older age. However the evidence available suggests that taken as a whole sports clubs in England are not making the contribution to widening and sustaining participation that their potential suggests and generally do not 'measure up' to their European counterparts.

We do not have trend data on sports club membership amongst adults but we do have statistics from the 1996 GHS and trend data for young people from the 1994, 1999 and 2002 Young People and Sport surveys (Sport England, 2003). In 1996 only 8% of the population was a member of a sports club. Of particular interest however is the drop out from club sport that occurs when young people leave school. Figure 6 shows that 47% of secondary aged young people are a member of a 'sports club' but that this drops to 17% amongst 16 to 19 year olds and then continues to decrease as people get older.

Sports clubs in England also significantly over-represent white, professional males and under-represent women (4% compared with 13%), semi and unskilled manual social class groups (3.5% Unskilled Manual compared with16% Professional), Asians and Black Caribbean's and people with a disability (eg 47% of young people are members of a club compared with 13% of young people with a disability).

Figure 6: Sports club membership in England



Source:1996 GHS and 2002 Young People Survey

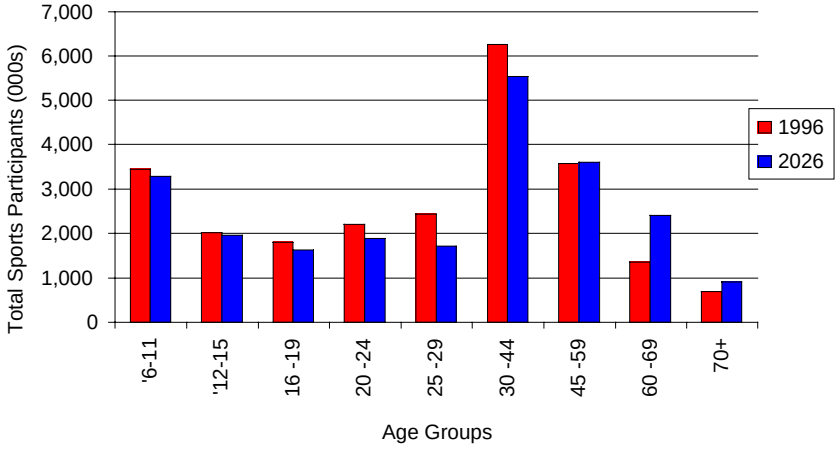
An overview of the research evidence points towards broadly static levels of participation throughout the 1990's. In addition although there is some evidence that some small progress has been made to narrow 'the gender gap' there is no evidence to suggest that sport has widened its participation base to include more people from low incomes, from different ethnic minorities and from people with a disability. This despite the many years of public policy priority focused on promoting 'sport for all' and extending participation amongst a range of 'targeted social groups'.

The broader social context – what are the key drivers pushing up or pulling down sports participation over the next 20 years

It is likely that the biggest influence on the numbers participating in sport will come from the demographic changes that will result in an ageing population. We have already seen that older age groups have significantly lower participation rates than the young and should these differences continue, and with all other factors remaining constant, the headline rate of participation will fall. Figure 7 shows the projected numbers of participants in 2024 based on a continuation of the trends in sports participation seen between 1990 and 1996 and taking into account the changes in population structure (Rowe, N and Moore S, 2001). Based on these assumptions the number of young participants aged between 6 and 15 years will fall by 250,000 between 1996 and 2024 and the number aged 45 years

and over will increase by 1.3 million. Overall however the participation rate will fall from 53% of the population in 1996 to 46% in 2024.

Projected changes in the numbers of sports participants (1996 - 2026) based on trends between 1990 and 1996



Other social trends that will be likely to impact on both the level and nature of sports participation over the coming years include (see Henley, 2003):

- **'the ageless population'** – though chronologically older attitudinally people are increasingly 'acting young'. Couple this with the higher disposable income of the current over 50's and it suggests a growing demand amongst this age group for sport and leisure related activities. Sport must be able to respond to the opportunities that this market brings by providing the right mix of activities and quality environments that appeal to this often discerning group.

- **household fragmentation** – from 1971 to 1996 married couple households fell from 11.2 million to 10.2 million and is predicted to continue to decline to 9.4 million in 2011. Single person households will increase from 30% of total households to 33% in 2011. More single person households suggests an increasing demand for out of home leisure creating potential to drive up sports participation.

- **family life still important to many** – although family values apparently in crisis there is counter evidence to suggest that 'family' is still the top goal for many people both emotionally and economically. 94% of people regard their family as 'an important source of pride'. Sport has the potential to tap into this family market but needs to provide more attractive family friendly environments.

- **the growing ethnic mix** – there are currently 6.4 million (2001) people from ethnic minority backgrounds in England making up 13% of the total population. The 2001 census identifies some areas where 'ethnic minorities' are actually 'ethnic majorities' eg in Newham and Brent. Existing evidence shows participation rates amongst ethnic minorities are lower than for the white population. In an increasingly multi-cultural population sport will need to be more sensitive to the barriers that impact on these groups and provide the types of activities that appeal to them within environments that are accessible and welcoming.

- **the 'time squeeze' –** although the average number of working hours has stabilised since the nineties the 'leisure society' anticipated by many social commentators seems far from becoming a reality. The average weekly working hours in the UK increased from 42.3 in 1983 to 43.6 in 1999. The UK has some of the longest working hours in Europe – for example the equivalent figure in Germany in 1999 was 40.9 hours in Italy 38.5 hours and in Belgium 38.4 hours. More people saying they feel exhausted is accompanying this increasing 'time squeeze'. A Henley Centre survey in 2002 found 45% of people agreeing with the statement 'I am so tired in the evenings that I often don't have the energy to do much'. In most surveys asking people why they do not

participate in sport 'I haven't got the time' emerges as a major reason. Sport needs to be able to adapt to these time pressures by becoming more flexible and easily accessible to fit into people's busy lifestyles.

- **the search for well-being** – for an increasing number of consumers 'health' no longer refers just to lack of illness. Well-being encompasses feelings about the mind, body and spirituality, environment and relationships. Many see exercise as a 'route to well-being' along with other related lifestyle changes. A survey carried out by the Henley Centre in 1999/2000 showed that 34% of people would like to change the amount of exercise they do; 25% want to improve the way they look; and 37% want to reduce their weight. This provides an opportunity for sport to promote and align itself to this shift in motivation and expectations

- **expansion of higher education –** more young people are entering further/higher education than ever before. There was approximately 100,000 in HE in the 1950's and this had increased to 1.7 million in 2000. The Government has a target of 50% of 'under 30's' entering HE by 2005. The evidence shows that those entering higher education are much more likely to take part in sport than their peers and more likely to continue taking part in sport throughout their lives. Should post school education continue to expand this will provide a strong positive driver for increasing participation in sport.

- **'a connected society'** – consumers, especially the young, are connected wherever they are. In a survey by the Henley Centre in 2002 61% of young people aged 15 to 24 years agreed the 'I like to be contactable on my mobile all of the time'. Sport must move quickly to embrace the new technology for example through on-line booking systems or smart leisure cards. In the process it must take care however to ensure it does not leave behind the 'disconnected' older less affluent consumers.

- **'the fearful society'** – more traffic on the roads, increasing levels of street crime (whether real or perceived) and high profile cases of child abuse are leading to increasing concerns about safety. Over 80% of parents surveyed by MORI in 2000 said that 'children today get less exercise because parents are afraid to let them go out alone'. Unless these trends are reversed there will be fewer opportunities for spontaneous play and an increasing need for alternative environments if children are to remain active. These environments will need to provide children with the freedom to express themselves and develop their physical and social skills whilst giving parents the reassurance they need that their child is safe. This will place increasing demands on providers and will impact in particular on the voluntary sector where for example individuals working with children will be required to have police checks and will be more accountable than ever for the health and safety of the children in their care.

Facing up to the challenge – and making a difference.

We have already seen that sports participation rates in England have remained broadly unchanged over the last two decades or so and that sport in England has continued to be characterised by considerable social inequities. We have seen little change in the social landscape of sport despite significant investment by local government over this period and continued efforts by Government and the then GB and English Sports Councils to increase and widen participation. The 1980's and 1990s saw the development of the recreation management profession, an increase in sports development officers, an expansion of local authority leisure departments, a number of national campaigns, a national junior sports development programme, improved support and training for volunteers and a number of coaching initiatives. And still participation rates did not go up or inequities become narrowed.

Even the significant boost in funding provided by the national lottery in the second half of the 1990's does not appear to have made a significant difference to overall participation rates which have remained stubbornly static based on recent statistics provided from the DCMS 'Time Use Survey' carried out in 2000 (Office for National Statistics, 2003).

It is in this context, with rising expectations and the reality of reduced direct funding from Lottery sources that Sport England will be setting its business targets for sport over the next 17 years or so to 2020. Any targets to increase and widen participation must be underpinned with a belief, backed up by a hard-nosed business assessment that we can deliver in the future what hasn't been delivered in the past. They must also take into account the social trends discussed above that at times are tending to

drive participation rates down or at the very least posing challenges for sport to be provided in new ways that meet changing and increasingly demanding consumer expectations.

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Sport, physical activity and health: Future prospects for improving the health of the nation

Nick Rowe, Neil Beasley and Ryan Adams, Sport England

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of physical activity levels in England and the contribution that sport can make to raise levels of activity sufficient to achieve a health benefit. The evidence is primarily drawn from the 1998 Health Survey for England commissioned by the Department of Health and the focus is on the adult population aged 16 years and over. This survey provides the most up to date statistics on the levels of physical activity in the English population. Where appropriate the paper draws on other statistical sources for example on levels of obesity and overweight in the population and levels of coronary heart disease (both health conditions for which there is strong scientific evidence of reduced risk from an 'active lifestyle').

The focus of the paper is on:

What are physical activity levels now? This section examines current levels of physical activity in the population including an assessment of trends in activity levels and differences in activity with age, social class and gender;

How important is sport and walking as a contributor towards overall activity levels? This section considers the 'mix' of activities that make up overall levels of physical activity in the population and within sport which activities make the greatest contribution to health;

What are we seeking to achieve? In this section we examine the target set for physical activity levels within 'Game Plan' and discusses possible business plan targets for Sport England that focus on sports' contribution to increasing levels of activity beneficial to health

What is the challenge facing us if we are to achieve our targets to make significant health gains through increased participation in sport and walking? This section includes an assessment of how many people are sedentary, how many doing some sporting activity but not enough and how many are doing enough but will need to continue at that level.

What are some of the potential benefits of meeting the challenge and the cost of not doing so? This section summarises the health benefits derived from physical activity and the potential cost savings. It shows how levels of coronary heart disease and obesity in England compare with those found in other countries and looks at the future prospects for health in England should we not meet the challenge to raise activity levels.

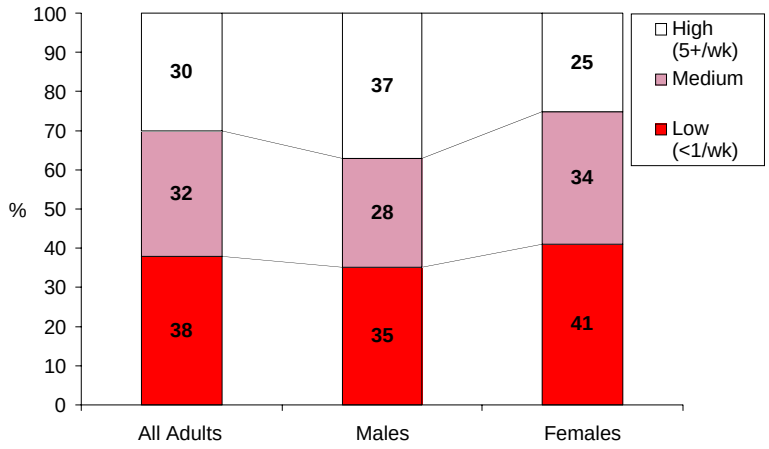
Definitions

Throughout the paper reference is made to 'physical activity levels sufficient to achieve health benefits'. This is defined as having carried out 30 minutes of at least moderate activity on at least 5 days a week. This level is the current recommendation from the Department of Health based on the best scientific evidence available. When reference is made to 'sport' it is based on the Council of Europe definition, which includes a wide range of informal, recreational, and fitness related activities in addition to formal organised and competitive sports.

What are the current levels of physical activity in England?

Figure 1 shows physical activity levels for the population as a whole and by gender. The 'high' category are those achieving health guidelines, the 'medium' category are those taking part in moderate activity of sufficient duration at least one day a week but less than 5 days and the 'low' category are those who do not do one occasion of activity of sufficient intensity and duration (defined as 'sedentary')

Figure 1: Physical activity level by sex, 1998, England



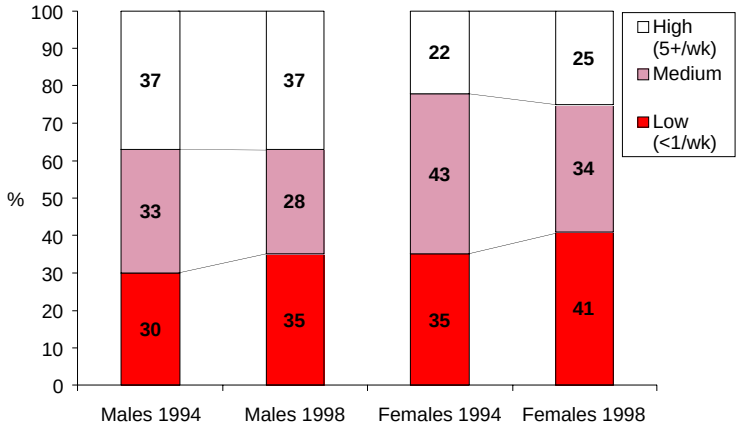
Source: Health Survey for England 1998

Thirty percent of the adult population do enough activity to meet health guidelines but there are significant differences between men and women with 37% of men meeting guidelines compared with 25% of women. At the other end of the spectrum nearly four in 10 adults (38%) may be classified as sedentary. There is again a difference between men and women with more women (41%) classified as sedentary compared with men (35%).

Figure 2 shows the changes in activity levels between 1994 and 1998 (Department of Health, . Over this four year period there was no change in the percentage of men who were achieving activity for health guidelines but there was a reduction in the 'medium' category and an increase in the percentage of men who were 'sedentary' (from 30% to 35%). For women there was an increase in the percentage 'active for health' from 22% to 25% but as was the case for men there was a contraction in those doing 'some activity but not enough for health benefits' (from 43% to 34%) and an increase in those who were sedentary (from 35% to 41%).

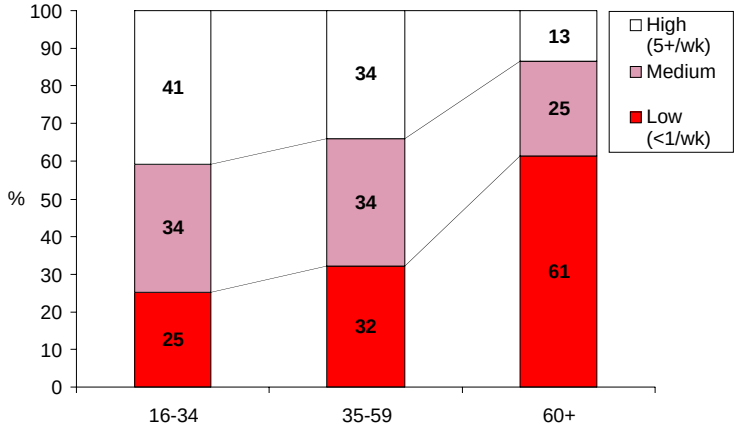
Figure 3 shows activity levels for three age groups in the population in 1998. The proportions in the highly active group decrease markedly with age with the greatest drop out occurring amongst those aged 60 year and over. In fact those aged 60 plus were twice as likely to be sedentary as those aged 35 to 59 years.

Figure 2: Physical activity level by sex, 1994 and 1998, England



Source: Health Survey for England 1998

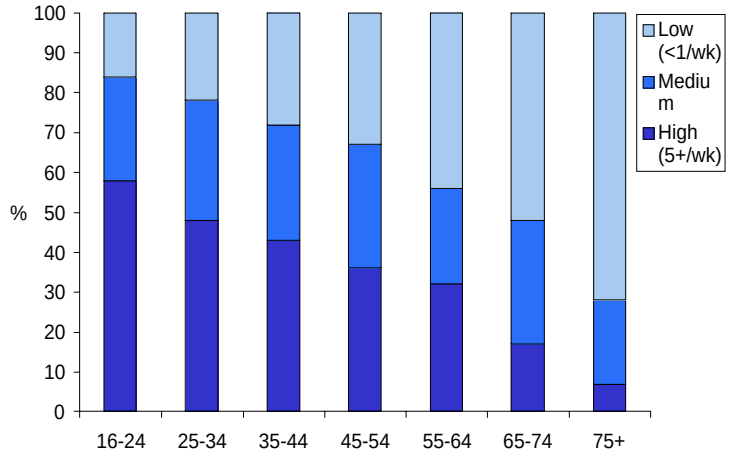
Figure 3: Physical activity level by age group, 1998, England



Source: Health Survey for England 1998

Figure 4 shows activity levels for men across different age groups in the population in 1998. The 'middle group' of 'active at some level but not sufficient for health' remained broadly unchanged across different ages, but there was a marked increase in the sedentary group with age and an associated decrease in the 'active for health' group. The drop out in the 'highly active' is consistent between age groups with a slightly higher level of drop out between the ages of 55 to 64 and 65 to 74 years.

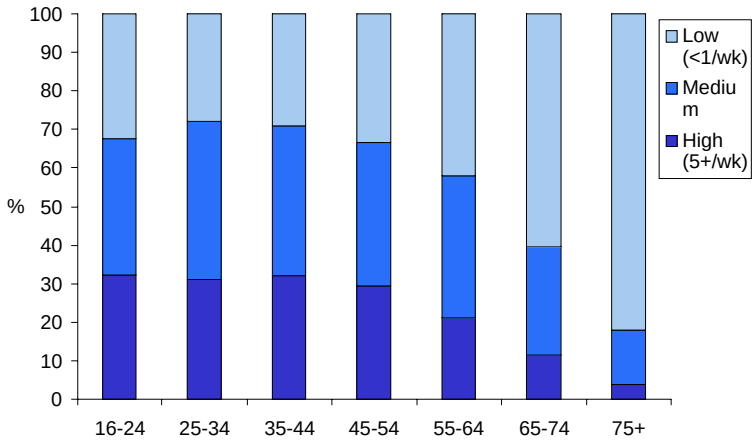
Figure 4: Physical activity level by age, men, 1998, England



Source: Health Survey for England 1998

Figure 5 shows the equivalent information for women. It paints a different picture than found for men with the 'highly active' hovering consistently around the 30% mark until the age of 54 when significant levels of drop out take place. The proportions that were sedentary actually decreased slightly into the 20's and 30's and early 40's but then increased rapidly for the age groups after this.

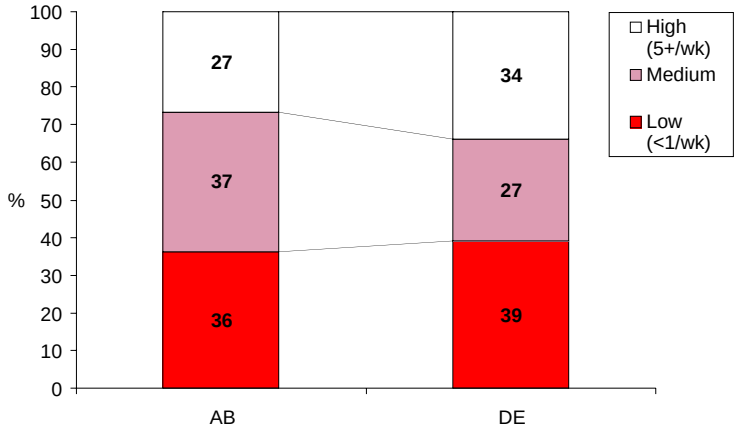
Figure 5: Physical activity level by age, women, 1998, England



Source: Health Survey for England 1998

Figure 6 shows the differences in activity levels between AB and DE socio-economic groups in 1998. A greater proportion of those in the DE group were active at levels beneficial for health, 34% compared with 27% in AB (this is a consequence of higher levels of activity at work). However, at the other end of the spectrum there was a greater proportion of DEs in the sedentary group than ABs (39% compared with 36%) with far smaller proportions of DEs in the middle (active but not active enough for health) group than found amongst the AB population (27% compared with 37%)

Figure 6: Physical activity level by social class, 1998, England

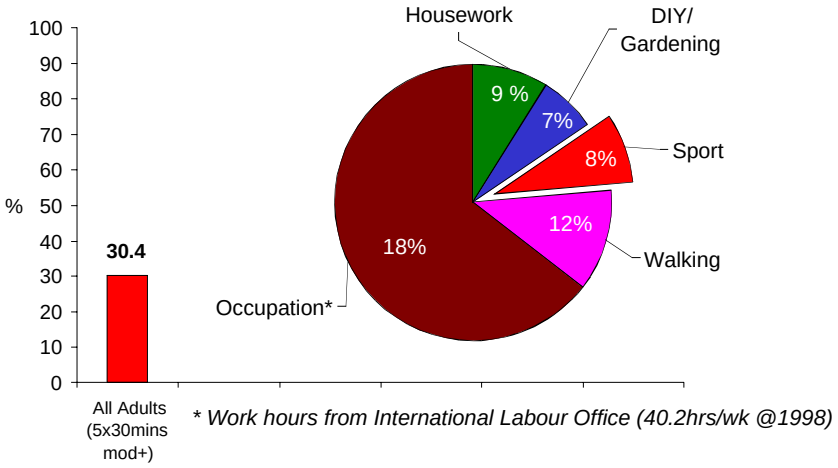


Source: Health Survey for England 1998

How important is sport and walking as a contributor towards overall activity levels?

Moderate levels of physical activity are derived from a number of different types of activities. Figure 7 shows the contribution these different types of activities make towards overall activity levels for those people in the English population who achieve levels of activity sufficient to achieve a health benefit (ie the 30 % of the population doing at least 5 occasions of activity a week of at least moderate intensity).

Figure 7: Physical activity contributions (average hours per week), 1998, England

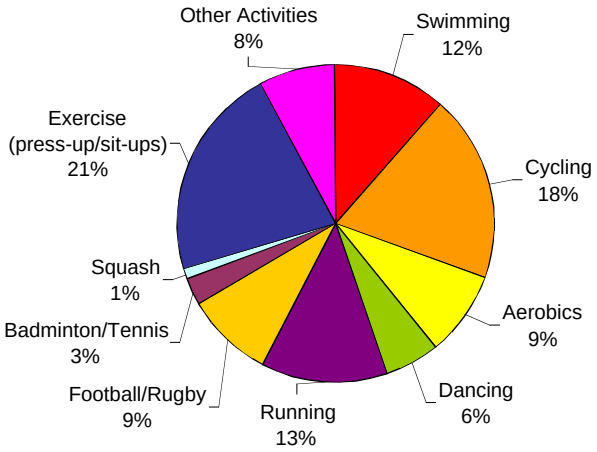


Source: Health Survey for England 1998

The greatest contributor towards overall physical activity levels is that achieved through people's occupation. This made up 64% of the total 'activity hours' in 1998, which is more than all of the other activities combined. The next largest contributor was 'walking' (which has to be brisk) making up 12% of the total followed by very similar proportions (between 7% and 9%) for housework, sport and DIY/gardening. In total therefore in 1998 sport and walking made up 20% of the overall activity taken part in by those people who achieved levels of activity sufficient for health benefits.

Figure 8 shows the different types of sports activities that go to make up the 20% referred to above. By definition the activities are ones that require at least 'moderate' levels of exertion. A generic group of 'exercise' activities (21%) features as the greatest contributor followed by cycling (18%), running (13%) and swimming (12%). It is clear that a limited range of sports make up the vast majority of overall activity levels achieved through sport.

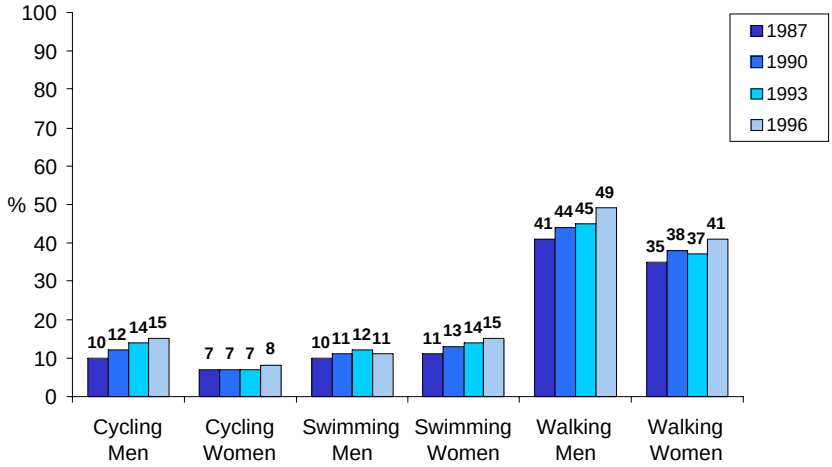
Figure 8: Sports contributing to physical activity (occurrences) , 1998, England



Source: Health Survey for England 1998

Figure 9 provides trend information from the General Household Survey (Sport England, 1999) on three of the significant contributors towards overall levels of physical activity through 'sport'. Although based on a different definition of participation than used in the Health Survey (ie a frequency of at least once a week and with no reference to intensity) it does indicate that between 1987 and 1996 there was a growth in cycling amongst men, in swimming amongst women and in walking (at least 2 miles) for both sexes.

Figure 9: Trends in sport participation (previous four weeks), 1987-1996



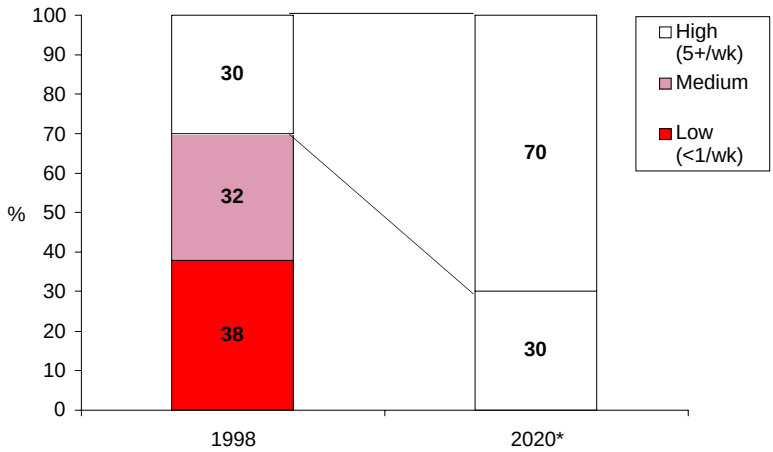
Source: GHS, 1987, 1990, 1993 and 1996

What are we seeking to achieve?

'Our target is for 70% (currently 30%) of the population to be reasonably active,for example 30 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week) by 2020' (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002)

Figure 10 provides a diagrammatic representation of the target set in Game Plan.

Figure 10: Where do we want to be: a vision for sport and physical activity in 2020, England



*** Target taken from *Game Plan*, DCMS and Strategy Unit Report, 2002**

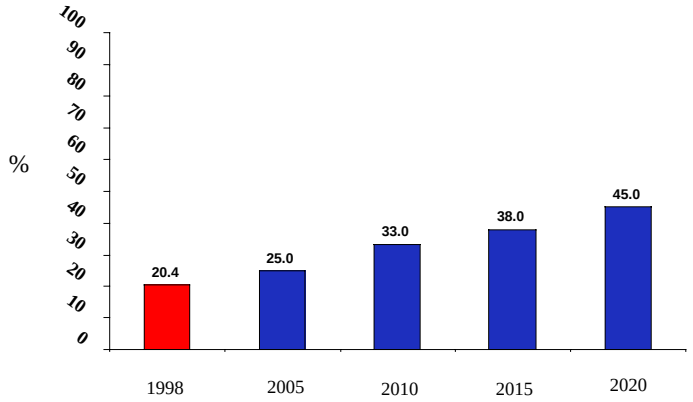
Source: Health Survey for England 1998

This aspirational target is based on the levels of physical activity that have been reported in Scandinavian countries and in particular in Finland. The report goes on to say that: *'our primary aim is to develop a sport and physical activity culture to produce a fitter, more active population and realise the significant health benefits and savings available, and the potential wider social benefits. Such an aim requires long- term cultural change'.*

Sport England has to determine within its own business planning process how it will position itself in relation to this overarching aim to increase physical activity levels in England. It is important for Sport England to keep its unique identity as the leading sports development agency whilst still being seen to be a key player in the physical activity and health agenda. In order to achieve this positioning it is proposed that Sport England within its business plan (and as part of its Funding Agreement with DCMS) set a target based on 'sports contribution to overall physical activity levels required for health'.

The proposed target (yet to be formally agreed) is to increase the percentage of the adult population taking part in sport (including walking) on at least 3 occasions a week of at least moderate intensity from 20% in 1998 to 45% in 2020 (see Figure 11). By achieving this target sport would be providing 3 'chunks' of the 5 'chunks' of activity required each week for a significant proportion of the population and as a consequence would make a major contribution to achieving the wider physical activity target set by Game Plan.

FIgure 11: Sport England target for the % of adults (16 plus) taking part in sport (incl. walking) on at least 3 occasions per week for 30 minutes or more duration and of at least moderate intensity



Source: Health Survey for England 1998

What is the challenge facing us if we are to achieve our targets to make significant health gains through increased participation in sport and walking?

The analysis that follows focuses on the challenge that Sport England, working with its partners, faces if it is to achieve a target of 45% of the population taking part in sport (including walking) at least 3 times a week and of at least moderate intensity by the year 2020. Based on the Health Survey results of 1998 the population has been divided between those who are meeting the target threshold, those who are doing some sport and or walking (one occasion per week) but not meeting the threshold and those who are not taking part at all at the levels of duration and intensity required and who are defined as 'sedentary'.

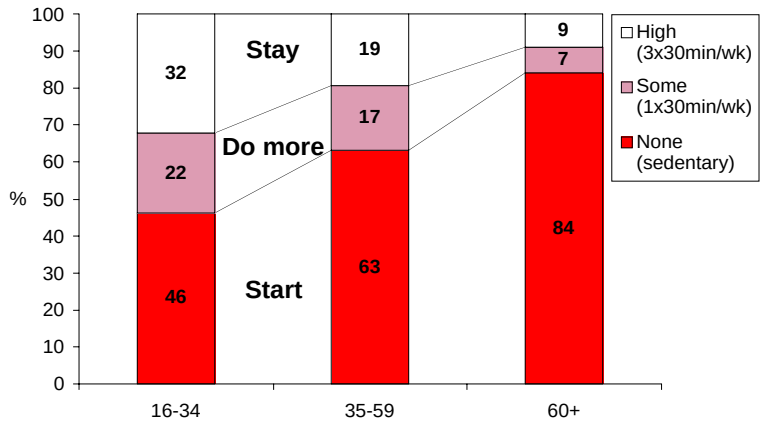
Figure 12: Sport and walking activity level by sex, 1998, England (adults 16 plus)

Source: Health Survey for England 1998

Figure 12 shows that in 1998 approximately one quarter of men (24%) and 18% of women were meeting the target threshold of 3 times a week moderate intensity. Interestingly the percentage of men

and women doing some sport and walking but not enough is approximately the same at 15% to 16%. However the percentage of women defined as 'sedentary' (67%) is significantly greater than men (60%). If Sport England is to achieve the target for 2020 and in the process overcome gender inequity it will not just need to get those doing some to do more but will also need to reach deep into the current non participant 'sedentary' population and get them to start and then continue to be regularly active.

Figure 13: Sport and walking activity level by age group, 1998, England

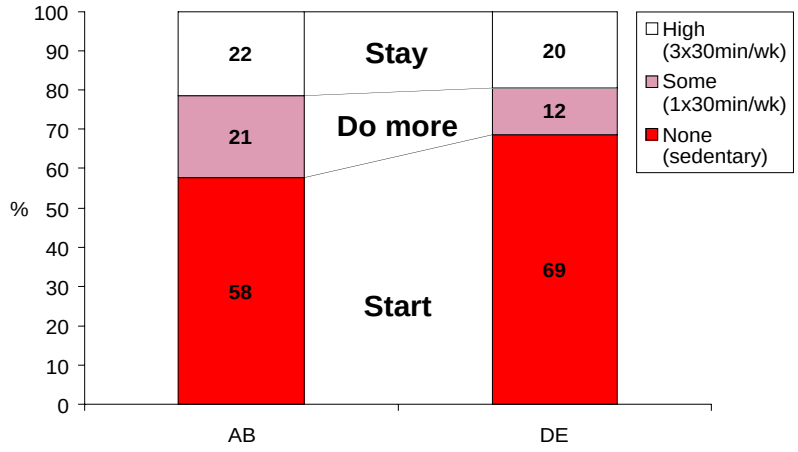


Source: Health Survey for England 1998

Figure 13 shows how sport and walking activity levels vary across different age groups. It demonstrates clearly how the percentage taking part regularly in 'active' sport and walking declines as people get older. It also shows the substantial increase with age in the proportion of the population who are not doing any sport or walking of 30 minutes duration and moderate intensity. Amongst those aged 60 plus more than 8 out of 10 are in this category.

Once again this demonstrates the challenge facing Sport England. In order to achieve its overall target for 2020 of 45% of the population taking part on 3 occasions per week of moderate intensity we will need to reduce drop out with age and extend regular participation deep into the older age groups in the population. This imperative is reinforced by the fact of an ageing population structure that will result by 2020 in a 31% increase in the numbers of people aged 60 plus compared with for example a 7% decrease in those aged 0 to 14 years and a 6% decrease in those aged 25 to 44 years.

Figure 14: Sport and walking activity level by social class, 1998, England



Source: Health Survey for England 1998

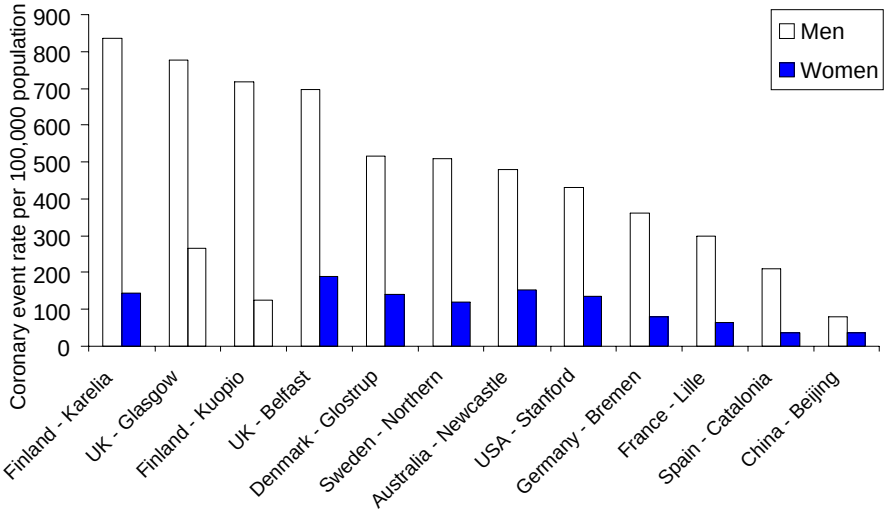
Figure 14 shows how sport and walking activity levels differ between AB and DE social classes. Interestingly the proportions meeting the target levels are broadly comparable at 22% and 20%. However a much greater proportion of those in the AB group are doing some sport and walking below the threshold level while a much greater proportion of those in the DE group are in the sedentary category. An emphasis amongst ABs for those doing some to do more if successful would make a substantial contribution towards meeting the target whilst amongst the DE group greater efforts will be needed to get those who are sedentary to start being active. Although posing a bigger challenge it is likely that the payoff in terms of improved health and reduction of disease will be greater by getting those in the DE group to be active than those in the AB Group as it is amongst this group that we find the highest level of lifestyle related morbidity and mortality.

What are some of the potential benefits of meeting the challenge and the cost of not doing so?

The scientific evidence supporting the health benefits derived from regular physical activity of at least moderate intensity is compelling. Physical activity is linked with a reduction in the risk of a wide range of diseases and poor health conditions. These include obesity, coronary heart disease (see Haskell W.L ???? for a summary of the evidence regarding coronary heart disease) and stroke, Type II diabetes, osteoporosis, some types of cancers and high blood pressure. There is also evidence linking regular physical activity with psychological benefits particularly amongst those experiencing mild depression. Furthermore regular physical activity can increase the quality of life and independence in older age and, by increasing muscle strength, reduces the risk of falls and broken hips which are a major cause of mortality amongst the elderly. (see US Department of Health and Human Service, 1996 for a review of the evidence and guidance on recommended levels of activity for health)

The UK has some of the highest rates of coronary heart disease in the world. Figure 15 shows the results from an international study conducted by the World Health Organisation (Tunstall-Pedoe et al 1999). Although focusing on Glasgow and Belfast the results are likely to be broadly comparable to any major conurbation with high levels of social deprivation.

Figure 15:International prevalence of coronary heart disease amongst men and women, 35-64

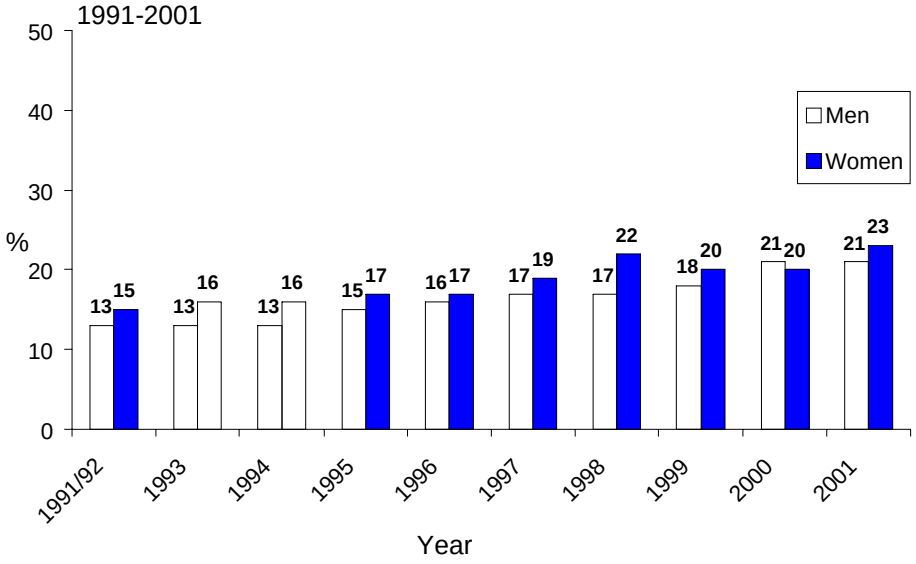


Source: (WHO) - sponsored "MONICA" (from MONItoring CArdiovascular disease) Project, 1999

It is estimated that about 36% of deaths from CHD in men and 38% of deaths from CHD in women are due to lack of physical activity and that 9% of deaths from CHD in the UK could be avoided if people who are currently sedentary or have a light level of physical activity increased their level of physical activity to a moderate level.

Figure 16 shows how levels of obesity in England have been steadily increasing over the last decade so that by 2001 they had increased by a staggering 50% of the 1991/92 baseline levels for both men and women.

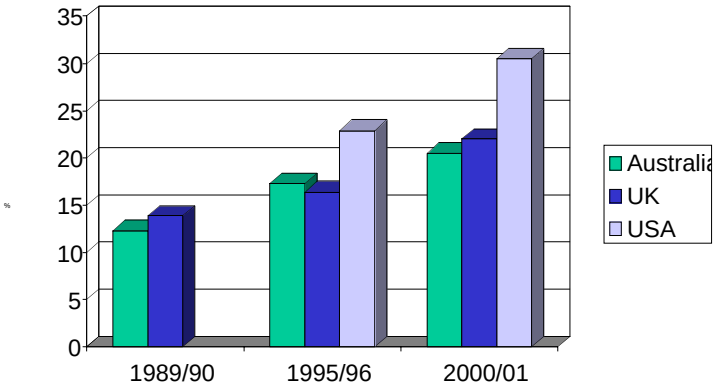
Figure 16: Prevalence of obesity in adults (16-64) in England, 1991-2001



Source: Health Survey for England, Department of Health

Figure 17 compares the changes in the obese population in England, Australia and the USA. It shows that the trends are broadly comparable in England and Australia but that the USA has levels of obesity that are substantially higher and appear to still be on an upward trend. The American experience is a cautionary one in providing the example of 'what might happen' in England without significant public policy intervention to counteract these trends. Should the trends in levels of obesity experienced in England since 1980 continue unabated we will by 2020 have exceeded the levels currently seen in the USA.

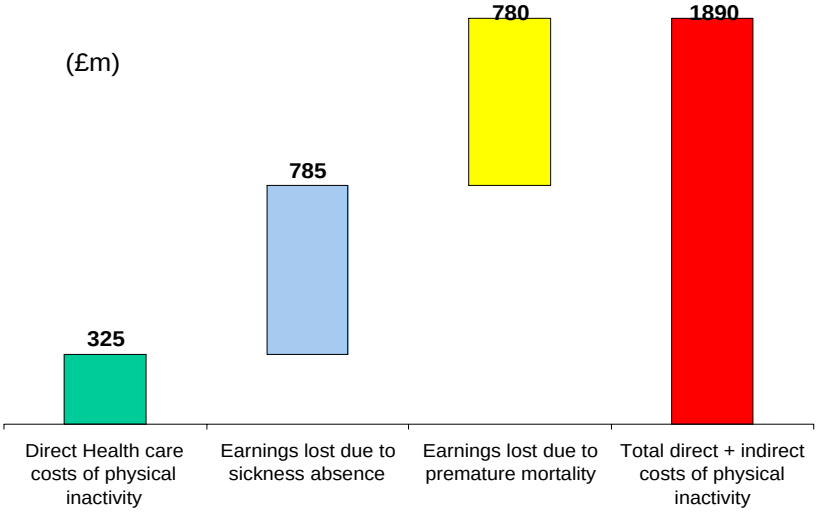
Figure 17: Trends in proportion of population obese (BMI>30) in UK, Australia and USA



Source: Health Survey for England, Department of Health;Report of the AusDiab Study, 2000; National Centre for Health Statistics US, 1999-2000

The 'Strategy Unit' in Game Plan estimated the costs to the nation of physical inactivity. They estimated, based on what were considered conservative assumptions, that the total cost to England of physical inactivity is in the order of £2 billion a year (see Figure 18). Using the same model it was estimated that a 10% increase in adult activity would benefit England by around £500 million a year.

Figure 18: The total cost of physical inactivity to England per annum



Source: Game Plan, DCMS and Strategy Unit Report, 2002

Concluding observations

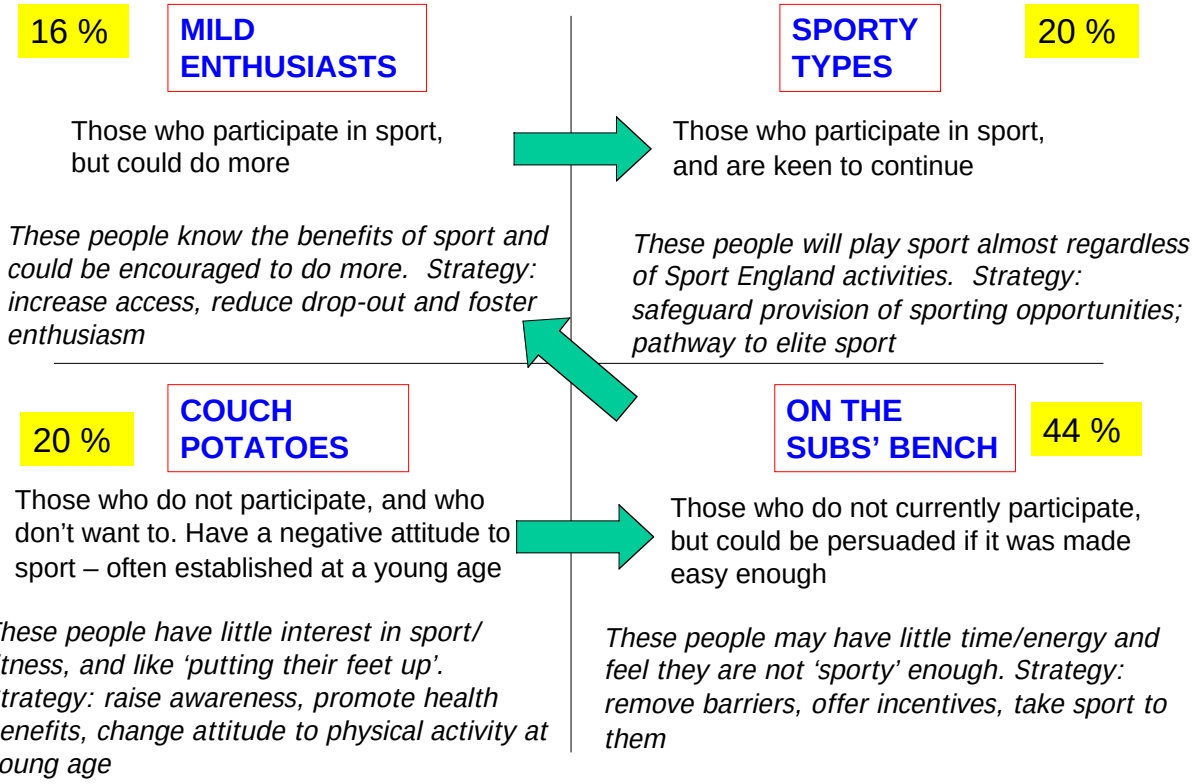
This paper has focused on sports interface with the health agenda. The contribution sport can make to health is primarily through the extent to which it contributes towards increasing physical activity (although there is also some evidence to suggest that the social engagement aspects of sport are beneficial in their own right). Current scientific evidence suggests that to derive a health benefit from physical activity it needs to be of at least moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Many sports have the distinct advantage over other types of activity of being by their nature sufficiently physically demanding to meet the intensity required for health and in their normal practice to be of sufficient duration.

This paper has shown the 'menu of activities' that go to make up the total activity levels of the 30% or so who currently meet the health guidelines. It demonstrates the important role sport and walking already make – but more than this it suggests an increasingly important role in the future. Outside of sport and walking the opportunities to promote other types of activities are limited. The trend for physically demanding jobs is decreasing; the cultural drivers are towards less activity derived through housework; and it is difficult to envisage public intervention polices aimed specifically at promoting gardening and DIY.

Notwithstanding the now compelling case for the benefits from physical activity and the important contribution sport and walking can make, there is still a huge challenge to be faced if we are to make England an active sporting nation. The demographics and many of the cultural drivers are pushing us towards a more sedentary rather than active nation.

In this paper it is suggested that Sport England set a specific target to increase the contribution sport (including walking) is making towards achieving the broader target proposed within Game Plan of 70% of the population achieving physical activity levels sufficient for health. The suggested target for Sport England is to increase the percentage of the population taking part in sport and walking on at least 3 occasions per week and of at least moderate intensity from 20% in 1998 to 45% in 2020. In order to achieve this target we will need not only to get those who are 'currently doing some sport and walking but not enough' to do more but also convert a large number of people who are currently sedentary into regular participants. Furthermore the target cannot be achieved by focusing only on certain social groups – as sedentary behaviour spans all social groups – although a greater 'health return' may be achieved by increasing activity levels amongst the DE social group where the negative impacts of lifestyle related diseases are at their greatest.

Figure 19: Segmentation of participation 'market'



How can we respond to this challenge? Based on the evidence available Figure 19 proposes dividing the 'market' for participation in sport into four segments. For each segment there would be a targeted strategy to increase/maintain participation in sport, or simply to change attitudes towards physical activity for the better and get people to 'start' participating. This approach provides a more sophisticated cost effective framework for interventions than achieved from a scattergun approach that targets everyone in the same way.

The percentages beside each box relate to the activity levels reported in the Health Survey for England, with the 'Sporty Types' achieving the target threshold, the 'Mild Enthusiasts' doing some activity but not achieving the target, and the remaining two segments currently sedentary. This segmentation splits the sedentary group into those who are generally averse to sport/physical activity ('Couch Potatoes') and those who could potentially become active ('On the Subs' Bench'). We have assumed that approximately a third of those who are sedentary are happy to remain this way at the moment, while the rest could be more easily persuaded to become active. This split would need to be verified through further research.

The arrows in Figure 19 show the path we are aiming to move people as they respond to the strategies of Sport England and its key partner organisations. Although not completely out of the question it would be unrealistic to expect 'Couch Potatoes' to suddenly become 'Sporty'; for example they are unlikely to simply decide to join a sports club if they have never shown an interest in organised sports activity before. Similarly they would be unlikely to become regular swimmers if we built a swimming pool on their doorstep. The strategy for this group is more subtle, changing their attitudes towards physical activity and raising awareness of the health benefits it provides. This change of attitude is ideally achieved at an early age so that over time we reduce the proportion of the population ever becoming couch potatoes in the first place.

As they move onto the 'Subs' Bench', we want to make sure that barriers to participation are removed, and that we find ways to take sport to where people are making it as convenient and attractive for them as possible. As they become 'Mild Enthusiasts' we need to do more to retain them in sport by increasing access and opportunities, and fostering enthusiasm to do more sport. For those in the

‘sporty’ group, our role is to ensure that opportunities for sport are not eroded, that the talented are identified and that we put into place pathways into elite sport for those with sufficient talent and motivation.

This segmentation involves more than just dividing people along social class, age or gender lines. We already know, for example, that the ‘Sporty Type’ crosses social class boundaries. What we need in order to action this segmentation, involves detailed research into peoples’ attitudes to a range of variables including sport, physical activity, health, family, leisure time and local community, as well as their lifestyle, habits and beliefs. We can then build up a picture of each of the groups and start to work out exactly what messages and strategies they are likely to respond to, and who is best placed to deliver them. Sport England’s research programme for 2003/4 includes proposals for more qualitative research that will develop our understanding of the market and expand and refine the conceptual model outlined above.

In order to achieve the magnitude of social and behavioural change referred to above requires a step change in the attitude of the Department of Health and public health providers at regional and local level. Sport cannot achieve these outcomes on its own. ‘Health’ must place physical activity higher on its list of priorities and back up this commitment with real resources. The new cross Activity Co-ordination Team (ACT) emerging from the Game Plan recommendations will be a crucial player in raising the profile of physical activity and sport across government and particularly within the DH. Sport must grasp this opportunity by having its case well prepared and by being able to demonstrate with evidence that it is ready to respond to the challenge and that it is capable of delivering the required outcomes.

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Demography, social trends and inclusion

Sport and the Ageing Population: Do older people have a place in driving up participation in sport?

Jonathan Long, Centre for Leisure and Sport Research, Leeds Metropolitan University

Sporting Invisibility

Naively typing "older people" into the search facility on the Sport England web site produced 401 'hits' (15/4/03). Initial enthusiasm soon dissipated. The vast majority were in fact about the young, followed by substantial numbers of 'people' generally and 'disabled people'. There were four concerned with 'people of all ages' and just three that were about older people, one of which was a press release about Trevor Brooking signing-up for the *Experience Corp*. Using 'ageing' produced seven entries, four for the *Golden Opportunities* conference and two about ageing facilities. This may not be an accurate representation of the priority attached to older people in Sport England, but…first impressions suggest something less than 1 on the sporting Richter scale.

Unfortunately the same can be said of academic writing and research on sport and physical activity among older people, at least in this country. Even in North America where there has been substantially more research McGuire (2000) asked, 'What do we know?' and had to conclude that it amounts to 'not much'.

A New Old Age?

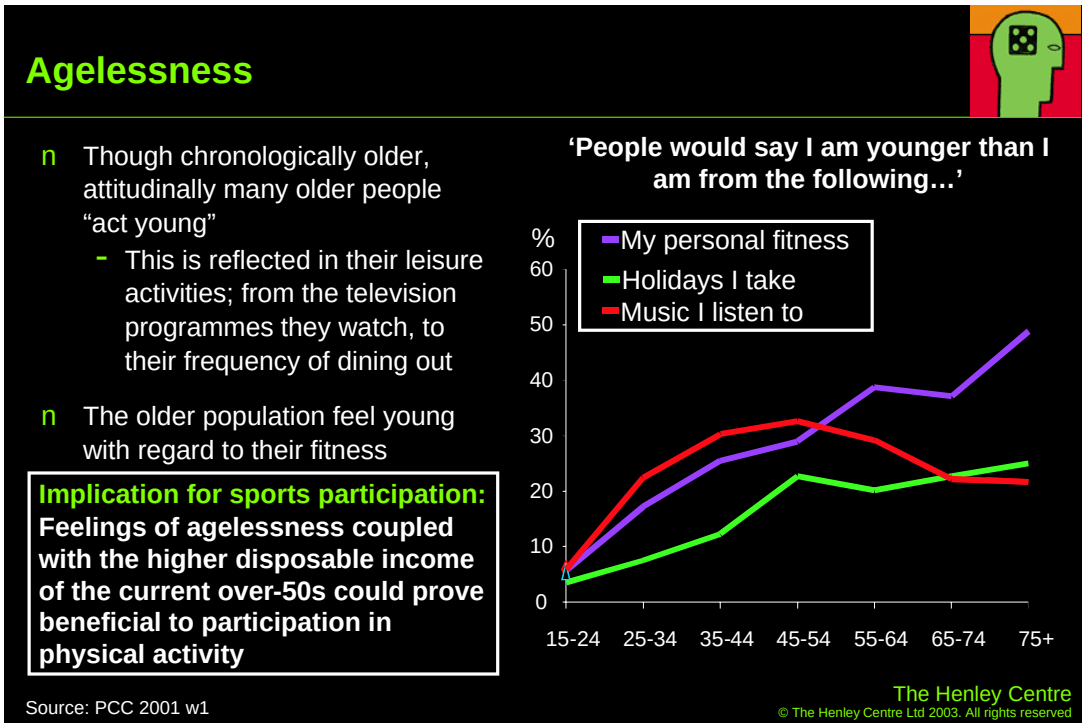
Rowe *et al.* (2004) suggest that the experience of people's later years is changing. Typically this new old age is presented as being characterised by greater life expectancy (and therefore more years in retirement), better health and greater affluence. Certainly the image of old age has shifted, though ageism seems unabated. What would be deemed prejudicial actions and beliefs if directed towards women and minority ethnic groups pass without comment when denigrating older people. The perception of a healthier old age warrants qualified support. Not only do people live to older ages, but also for the most part holding age constant does suggest there is better health.

However, the presumed increase in disposable income among older people applies only to some; old age is still the location of the greatest proportion of poverty. The National Audit Office, drawing on data from the Department for Work & Pensions (2002a) suggests that the current generation of pension age in GB is the most affluent ever (though they were reporting on the position before the recent stock market slide). Yet the Department for Work & Pensions (2002b) also recorded that in 2000-01 25% of pensioners were living below the government's official poverty line[1]. Clearly it is important to recognise that there are older people with considerable disposable incomes able to spend to secure their programmes of activity, but equally it is important not to allow that rosy image to obscure the impoverished position of many others.

Rowe *et al*. (2003) also suggest that today's older generation are 'acting young' (Figure 1). My scepticism suggests that it may be more a case of talking young rather than acting young, especially as such a large proportion of those aged 75+ believe that others think they are younger than they actually are because of their fitness. However, those now entering the older age groups are more leisure literate and may demand more sporting opportunities. They are also less likely to be accepting of what others deem appropriate behaviour for older people, and may indeed be prepared to grow old disgracefully (Hen Co-op, 1993).

[1] See also the Help the Aged website: http://www.helptheaged.org.uk/CampaignsNews/Poverty/_default.htm

Figure 1: Thinking and Acting Young



One aspect that seems to be overlooked is the changing composition of these older groups. For example, people from minority ethnic groups are currently proportionately under-represented among the older age groups, but are growing in number.

The Demographics of a Greying Society

Incrementally population profiles show little change. However, viewed over the longer term we are witnessing a profound shift in the nation's demographic structure, what has been termed 'the greying of the nation'. A few headline points serve to highlight the redistribution.

- According to the population projections produced by the Government Actuaries Department (GAD), the 35-39 age band reached a peak in 2001. That peak can then be seen working its way through the projected profiles such that it is the 60-64 age band that is peaking in 2026.

- Preceding them, though, are the post-war 'baby boomers', now approaching retirement or already retired early.

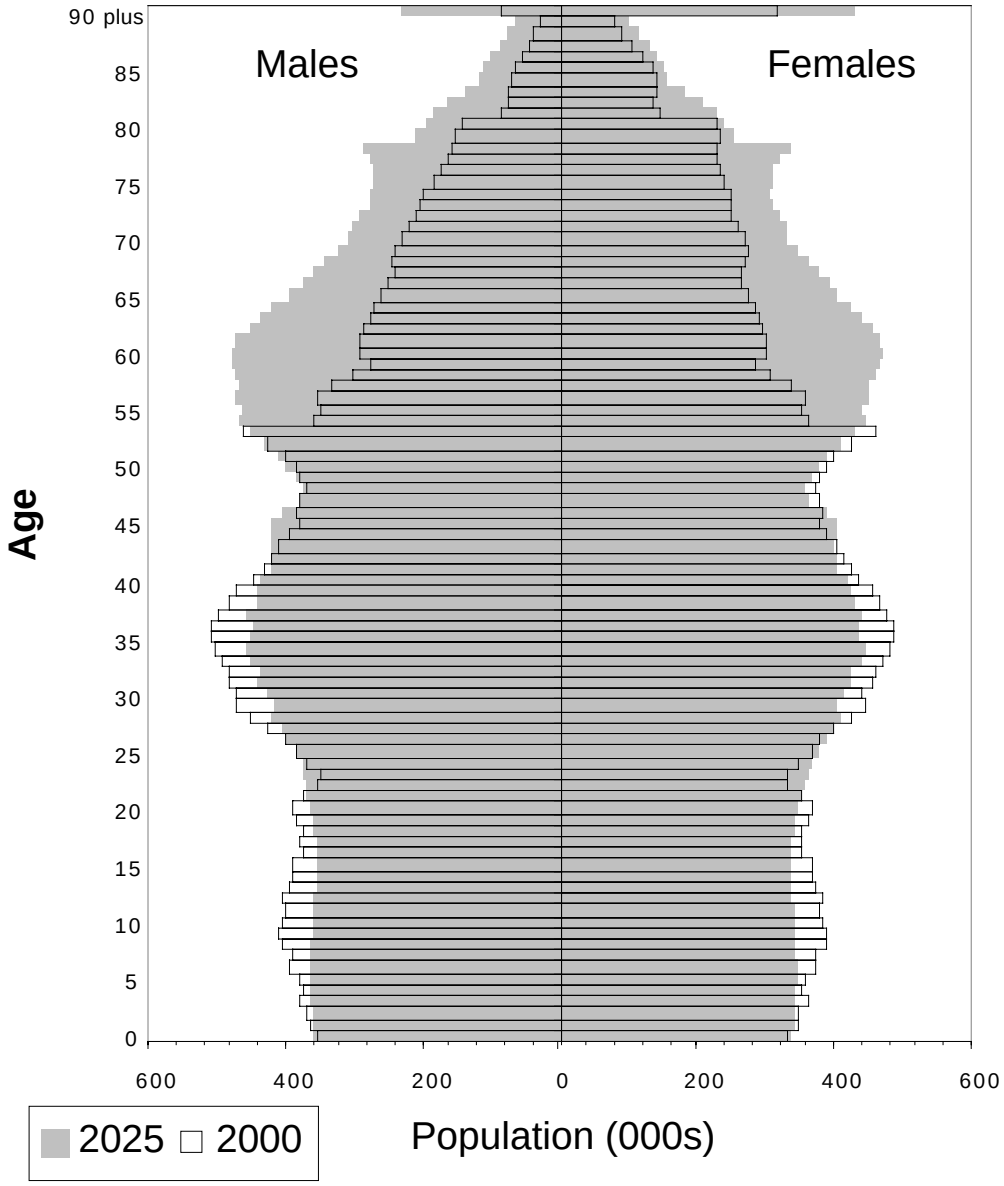
- More generally, Census 2001 data show that the number of people aged 65 and over was more than 150% its 1961 level.

- However in relative terms it is the older age groups that have shown bigger increases with three times as many aged 85 and over in 2001 as there had been in 1961.

- At the same time birth rates have tended to fall, and are not expected to rise again in the immediate future. The consequence of this is that for the first time there will be more people aged over 65 than those aged under 16 by 2014.

Figure 2 has been produced by the Government Actuaries Department to show the changing age profile of the country's (UK) population. Despite the appellation this is no longer a pyramid, but a column. Population pyramids became so called because rising birth rates and continual mortality through the age range meant that the largest populations occurred among the youngest age groups with a pronounced tapering to the older age groups. This is no more, and the shaded area shows powerfully just how the balance will continue to shift over the next decades.

Figure 2: Age Pyramid of UK Population in 2000 and 2025
Source: Government Actuaries Department



What we are witnessing is not just an increase in the number of older people, but a disproportionate increase among the old. And significantly in sports terms, in these older groups there is a preponderance of women, who are consistently less likely to be touched by the sporting world.

The scale of the upper parts of this ‘pyramid’ re-emphasises the point made repeatedly that it is inappropriate to treat all those over 65, never mind over 50 as a single demographic group. It is vital that the mass is differentiated and Sport England identifies different strategies for the many different kinds of people being lumped together. Unfortunately, even the process of differentiating the old on the basis of chronological age is fraught with difficulties.

Who Are The Old?

Examinations of demographic data seem to invite the question, “When does someone become old, or classified as being old?” Beyond the bare statistics the conceptual definitions such as ‘old’, ‘elderly’, ‘older people’, ‘senior citizens’, have proved both elusive and controversial. In terms of sport and physical activity the biological component of ageing is certainly important, but this is not directly associated with chronology. And there is also a social component, linked not just to sociability, but also to autonomy and self image.

Many use 50 as the indicator of the onset of an older age. The Sports Council was previously involved with schemes like *Fifty Plus – All to Play For,* but no more. They, like *Saga* set the threshold quite low. I used to say this was about providing for our future selves… but no more.

Another critical division in people's minds is exceeding the allotted three score years and ten. Even though it does not bring overnight old age, perhaps the most common marker has been retirement, because there is a consequent step change in lifestyle (a challenge to role / purpose / status, an increase in free time, reduced income, etc.). However, 'retirement age', has been different for men and women, which has meant using different divisions when examining demographic data. Although this is now being equalised, in practical terms retirement itself has been becoming less and less equated with a specific age. There is an increasingly complex relationship between age and retirement.

Participation by Older People

So what are these older people doing in terms of sport and physical activity? There are no great surprises in what the General Household Survey reveals about activities engaged in at least once in the previous 4 weeks. The overall pattern remains one of declining participation with age; the only activity to go against this trend is bowls with highest participation levels in the 60-69 age group. Since the Allied Dunbar National Fitness Survey and the Health Education Authority National Survey of Activity and Health in men and women aged 50+ we have had data demonstrating that low levels of participation extend to physical activity more generally. Only 17% of those aged 50+ were identified as being frequently active, and even among those free from immobilising disease a third were still classified as sedentary (Skelton, *et al*. 1999).

The most popular activities among those recorded in the General Household Survey are presented in Table 1.

- *Table 1: The most popular activities with older men and women*

Men 60-69	*Women 60-69*	*Men 70+*	*Women 70+*
Walking	Walking	Walking	Walking
Snooker/billiards/pool	Keep-fit/yoga/dance	Cycling	Keep-fit/yoga/dance
Cycling	Swimming	Snooker…	Swimming
Swimming	Cycling	Bowls	Bowls
Golf	Bowls	Swimming	Cycling
Bowls	Golf	Keep-fit/yoga/dance	Golf

Source: General Household Survey, 1996

In relation to the literature on ageing, this raises the question of whether these therefore represent 'age appropriate' activities. Would focussing provision on these be an appropriate acknowledgement of what older people want or be confining them to stereotypical participation?

According to Rowe *et al*. (2003) the 60-69 group was the only one to continue its growth in participation between 1993 and 1996. However, the first row of Table 2 indicates that there is still a marked decline in participation with age, and that this is consistent across various ethnic groups.

Minority Ethnic Groups

As already noted, at the moment there are relatively few people from minority ethnic groups among the older cohorts, but this is set to change. Some of the sub-samples within the *National Survey of Ethnicity and Sport* are very small and have to be treated with caution; the smallest in Table 2 appear between brackets. The overall pattern is one of consistently lower participation among minority ethnic groups. The only activity that bucks the general trend is the relative popularity of keep fit / yoga among older people from an Indian background.

The vast majority of those in the older age groups within the minority ethnic populations are first generation immigrants. This will not continue for long as increasingly this age band will come to be dominated by people born in this country, but the implications of this have yet to be addressed in the sports world.

Table 2: Percentage of each age group participating in at least one activity, excluding walking, in the past 4 weeks (ethnic group by age profile)

	16-19	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-44*	*45-59*	*60-69*	*70+*
All	79	70	64	58	40	30	12
Black-Caribbean	[59]	[62]	[59]	50	31	11	[2]
Indian	70	61	60	40	25	18	[13]
Pakistani	64	40	42	21	14	[12]	n/a

Sources: General Household Survey, 1996 (UK)
National Survey of Ethnicity and Sport, 1999 (England)

These variations serve as a reminder that participation among older people is differentiated by a number of variables: class, income, health status, domestic circumstances... This is another plea that 'older people' should not be treated as a homogeneous group.

Older People as Volunteers

Our interest in older people in sport is not just in terms of their own participation, but what they contribute to facilitating provision. As there is a separate paper in this collection on volunteers in sport (Taylor, P), attention here will be limited to a few points. Sport in this country is dependent on a huge voluntary effort, a large proportion of which currently comes from older people. At least for as long as I have been involved in research, sport/leisure professionals and volunteers alike have been concerned with where the next generation of volunteers is coming from.

At first the increasing older population may seem like good news, but if the position in Britain is like that in the United States we would do well to heed the message from Putnam (2000). He collates evidence from various US sources, noting a decline in social connectedness through group membership and participation. This is reflected in a decline in involvement in community projects over the past three decades, a decline that is least marked among people over 65.

> *Traditionally, retirement has meant withdrawal from civic activity, and historically, volunteering declined after age fifty, but the current generation has turned that conventional wisdom on its head... they have resisted most staunchly the decline in participation in community projects*. (Putnam 2000: 130)

Putnam attributes this to a combination of factors. On the basis of evidence he culls from various time diary studies (something we have a shortage of in this country), he notes the growth in free time for those aged 60 and over. Moreover he suggests that improved health and finance mean a more active retirement. However, most important, he argues, is that this generation (born 1910-1940) represent a 'long civic generation', who have been more engaged in civic affairs throughout their lives. In other words, this is a cohort effect and should not be the cause of optimism for those looking to recruit volunteers as this generation is disappearing over the horizon. Putnam believes that the new breed of older people will not evidence the same civic commitment as they hold a rather different value set, founded more strongly in consumerism. Those now becoming old have learnt to be leisure consumers, expecting that sport and physical activity will be provided through the commercial or social markets.

The Benefits of Participation

Various agencies apart from Sport England are interested in sport or, more commonly, physical activity. For example, the British Heart Foundation, as part of its *Active for Later Life Resource*[2], identifies different kinds of benefit: physiological, psychological, social and maintaining independence.

> "There is overwhelming evidence of the importance of physical activity for the older person, including the immediate and long-term physiological, psychological and social benefits, for certain conditions directly associated with old age, but most importantly in assisting older people to maintain their independence in old age."

This sounds too good to be true, but are the supposed benefits real? According to the World Health Organisation they are:

[2] http://www.bhfactive.org.uk/

> For adults and ageing individuals physical activity has shown to improve balance, strength, co-ordination, flexibility, endurance, mental health, motor control and cognitive function. Improved flexibility, balance and muscle tone can help prevent falls – a major cause of disability among older people.
> (www.who.int/hpr/physactiv/ageing.shtml – accessed 2/4/03)

Such assertions are frequently reiterated (e.g. by the US Surgeon General[3]) and have received considerable research support (see, for example, Paffenbarger *et al*., 1994). Other claimed benefits of regular physical activity for older people include reduced risk of coronary heart disease, non-insulin dependent diabetes, osteoporosis and obesity. However, perhaps more important for everyday living among the older population are forms of participation that increase strength (Damush & Damush, 1999) and flexibility.

Biddle and Faulkner (forthcoming[4]) concluded that there are moderate benefits contributing to psychological wellbeing, and to constituent parts like self-efficacy. However, these benefits were dependent on sustained exercise and physical activity. Surveys of participation at local level, including our own work, have repeatedly stressed the importance of the social dimension of participation through the contribution made to connectedness. In so doing, sport and physical activity can help address the concern of Help the Aged with social isolation and loneliness among older people (Cattan, 2001). Biddle and Faulkner recognise that the social factors may contribute to psychological wellbeing, but insist that there is no evidence that the positive psychological benefits of physical activity are attributable to social factors alone.

However, most of the 'proof' of the benefits of participation relates to medical measures and is invariably based on physical activity rather than sport. Even then there is concern about the evidence base. Diss opened a special feature in the current edition of BASES World (June 2003) with a complaint that there is a lack of research evidence on the benefits of exercise with age.

What Will Deliver the Desired Benefits?

The debate continues about the best form of activity to secure the desired benefits, and prescriptions shift. Currently '30 minutes of moderate activity on at least 5 days a week' seems to hold sway in terms of delivering physiological benefits. However, as the US Surgeon General notes, some are not fit enough to take this on and need to start more gently (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996). The sports science research literature also offers a caution that older sports participants run greater risk of sporting injury. Much of the expertise for supplying/servicing the implied lower level of activity lies outside the normal sports field.

Just as we cannot treat older people as an undifferentiated mass, we also need to differentiate between different forms of sport and physical activity in terms of the benefits they are likely to deliver. Sports like bowls and snooker/pool (identified in Table 1 above as being relatively popular among the older cohorts) may not be able to deliver the physiological benefits claimed for sport, but on the other hand may offer considerable social benefits. Equally, physical activity like fitness training in the gym may be better able to deliver the physiological benefits, but offer less social benefit. It also seems likely that in light of the importance of the social dimension, if this is not inherent in the activity it will fail to encourage the adherence necessary to deliver the physiological benefits.

The direction of some of these relationships is not clear. For example, rather than being unfit because of lack of participation, some people do not engage in sport and physical activity because they are not well enough to do so (and the proportions in this position are likely to increase with older cohorts). Similarly with the social dimension; it is not simply that participation provides social contact. The US Surgeon General (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996) notes that the support of family and friends is consistently related to regular physical activity. So those who are socially well connected in the first place have a better chance of finding their way into participation than those who are not. By extension, therefore, public bodies need to provide surrogate support for those without such social capital.

The idea of choosing activities that will make them sweaty and out of breath is alien, even worrying to many (Finch, 1997). People may already be tired from the exertion of shopping or housework and not

[3] See, for example, http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/pdf/olderad.pdf
[4] Not yet published, but a summary is available at www.bhfactive.org.uk/reviews/psyc_wellbeing.htm

keen to engage in activities that will add to that, but they may be very keen to take part in sports that involve fun and social interaction.

Ageing and the Lifecourse

The observation that we age from birth may sound trite, but it is a salutary reminder that ageing is a continual process rather than a state, let alone one that can be defined by an arbitrary age. It happens at different rates in relation to different aspects of our lives, and for different sports. Indeed, this is especially apparent in sport where people tend to reach their peak at a relatively young age. At the time of preparing the presentation the oldest outfield player in the football Premiership was Nigel Winterburn at 39, and James Lowes had appeared as the old man of the rugby league Challenge Cup Final at 32 (and he had to be dissuaded from retiring at the end of the previous season). There are even younger peaks in competitive swimming and gymnastics. However, this need not deter continued participation as demonstrated by the group of women aged between 50 and 70 at the Gymnaestrade.

Returning to the proposition above from the British Heart Foundation, it seems the claims are eminently plausible as long as they are not exaggerated. Certainly it is easy to recognise the potential. My attempt at drawing a notional series of time lines plotting these dimensions through the lifecourse suggested that the importance of these factors shows consistently throughout - the exception being maintaining independence. Age may not therefore be such a big issue in terms of this set of benefits that people seek to derive from participation in sport, but as our earlier work showed (Long, 1987) retirement may make a difference. Arguably it increases the need for alternative physical activity, psychological stimulus (depending upon the suite of other interests), and social connections after the loss of work contacts. The report of the Health Survey for England suggests that sport and walking are particularly significant for older groups since they are far less likely to get their 5 x 30 minutes of moderate activity per week from work (reported as the most common source of physical activity). As their lives progress people may be less motivated by the prospect of competition, though some may still be very competitive when they take part. Similarly the desire to acquire new skills may decline, and the always important dimensions of fun and sociability become paramount (Finch, 1997).

Using the lifecourse as a means of reviewing participation is useful because of the emphasis placed on patterns set early. Their significance might be seen to stem from:

a) physiological reasons – e.g. increases in bone density attributed to participation at (even very) young ages persist into later life; and generally though increases in longevity are evident as a result of participation when older, they are greater from participation in youth (Paffenbarger *et al*., 1994);
b) experience and learning – people acquire not just the skills of the sport but a value set that predisposes them to activity and the knowledge of how to (find out how to) participate;
c) habituation – for example our work some time ago demonstrated that the activities in which people engaged in retirement were essentially those they participated in prior to retirement (long & Wimbush, 1985).

The strength of continuity in people's lives suggests it may be easier to work with existing forms of participation to keep people involved rather than re-engage them or introduce them to entirely new activities (see 're-engagement' and 'activity' below).

Within social gerontology several different models have been offered in efforts to theorise retirement, but have been extended more generally into considerations of ageing. The project to identify 'the' model seems doomed – it is more important that we recognise that these can co-exist as alternatives. Table 3 presents some of the key alternatives and identifies the associated implications for participation in sport and physical activity.

- *Table 3: Models of Ageing and Retirement*

Model	*Sporting Consequences*
Disengagement	Shedding activities
Re-engagement	Picking-up activities previously dropped
Activity	Acquiring range of new activities
Continuity	Maintain existing interests into old age

- *Disengagement* – In sporting terms disengagement is probably the most common, but tends to be scattered through the life course (note the legendary Wolfenden gap). The challenge for those in sport is to establish whether they can work with those who have followed this model to turn it into

- *Re-engagement* – It is relatively unusual for people in later life to return to the same sport, but there is a challenge here to identify what can be done to woo people back to sport generally.

- *Activity* – It is not common for people to take-up a range of new activities as they age, except when they look for replacement sports (e.g. give-up rugby league and take up squash, golf…), or are shocked by a health crisis. It is, however, more likely for physical activity than sport.

- *Continuity* – There are opportunities here to encourage people to participate via support for the growing veterans/masters sports structures. Even if people participate longer in competitive sport, this may still not last long enough to carry them into old age. Indeed there is always the possibility that extending competition will make later recreational participation less likely because of burn out, either physically (increased injury risk) or psychologically (just weary). Nonetheless, by its very nature this is probably the most amenable of the four to intervention by Sport England and its partners – participants share at least some of the same mindset / values. In sporting terms we can add long-term deliberate non-participation as a subset of Continuity. Sport England has to recognise that some people are not amenable to the sporting gospel.

People may have very different beliefs about age appropriate activity, and the idea of people thinking and acting younger than their age has already been raised. However currently, prevailing attitudes generally tend to militate against older people engaging in physical activity – the expectations of others may constrain what older people feel able to countenance, and may amount to ageism in presuming incompetence and denying opportunity (especially, we must admit, in the world of sport). Moreover, the growing post-modernist literature on the body has alerted us to the implications of self regard for participation in sport. Surrounded by images of bodies beautiful older people especially may be deterred from getting involved. But older people may also be constrained by their own assessment of age-appropriate behaviour and personal ability. The example set by the Hen Co-op (1993) in 'growing old disgracefully' is still not the norm, though for those who do want to resist stereotypical representations that devalue older people, sport and leisure can provide that opportunity (Wearing, 1995).

There is a fine line between providing 'appropriate' activities and constraining people within pre-set boundaries.

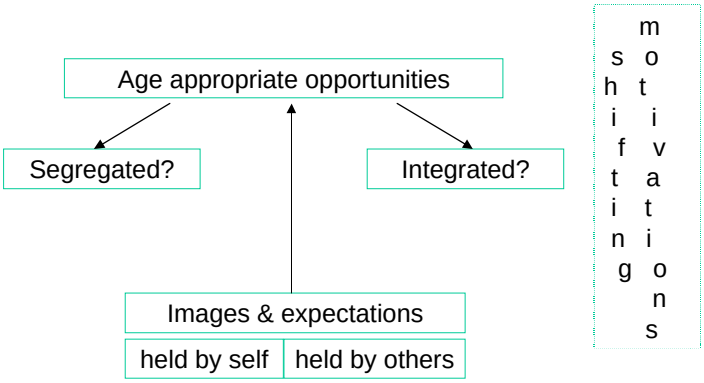
Towards Intervention

One of the key strands of my argument should be becoming clear: that Sport England cannot expect to have a single unitary strategy for increasing participation among older people (no one size fits all), but must instead develop a carefully differentiated approach. Figure 3 attempts to represent the dilemmas posed by trying to ascertain what might constitute age appropriate activities in light of concerns that these may be formulated by stereotypical views or actions shaped by the expectations of others or what we think others will permit. As previously noted (Long & Tongue, 1996: 10.9-05)

> …just because the leisure patterns of older people are currently perceived to be characterised by bingo, bowls and tea dances, does not mean that, even if such images were true, future patterns should necessarily remain the same.

The experience that older people have had of sport when younger may be very different from what sport can offer now; they may have little knowledge of the range of enjoyable activities available.

Figure 3: Appropriate Sporting Opportunities?



Plenty of people in retirement might well be interested in playing football if given the opportunity. It may be that opportunity has to be separate from fast, fit, highly skilled players, but such separation need not be on the basis of age – 'yoga for people who are stiff', 'walking football', 'social tennis', 'light weight circuits'. Different entry levels are important for people who may lack confidence in their own ability. The providers/facilitators need the knowledge and expertise to inspire confidence, but at the same time be like them/us. Many 'older people' reject out of hand provision accompanied by the tag 'old'. In an age dominated by the primacy of image, though, concerns about body image may also suggest separate provision. Of course, if we are to arrive at the level of participation set as a target by Sport England this need not be a dilemma – so many will be involved that both forms of provision will be viable alternatives, allowing people to make their own choice. There is a need to restore agency – people do not want to feel 'done unto', yet especially as a result of recent consumer culture people are less likely to make the provision themselves. The key to resolving the tension in Figure 3 has to lie in a reconciliation of the social structuring of 'age' and 'sport' and the functions individuals wish sport to fulfil.

As America is the source of much of the research on the lifestyles of older people, it might be appropriate to look to the measures being proposed there. As in Britain, one of the other key barriers identified as frustrating participation is poor transport, with repeated exhortations for transport to be provided to parks and other facilities offering activity programmes. Another recurring proposition that might not be expected in this country is that indoor malls should provide safe places for walking in any weather. While this kind of proposal might have little resonance in the UK it does serve to remind us of the everyday-ness of much physical activity. It also leads to another consideration – that Sport England must work co-operatively with a range of other organisations if older people are to be given appropriate opportunities to participate. Moreover, in some cases sports professionals are the wrong people to 'front' the initiatives. One of the respondents in the Health Education Authority study was quite clear that he did not want 'super fit athletes… not Linford Christie, ordinary people' (Finch, 1997: 56). Others may have better networks, more sympathetic ways of working, more appropriate language and greater credibility. In this regard we are not helped by the semantic nonsense of the Council of Europe definition of sport:

> Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.

While it is quite appropriate for those involved in sport to recognise the potential contribution of 'ordinary' physical activity, this kind of sporting imperialism is inappropriate, likely to alienate fellow professionals and deter those with an unfavourable orientation to sport.

Concluding Messages for Sport England in Driving-up Participation

It seems that Sport England is allowing the debate to be dominated by a single discourse that equates participation in sport and physical activity with a limited range of physiological benefits, ignoring even things like suppleness/flexibility that might be delivered by a different kind of participation. Beyond that the major contributions to mental health and social connectedness that have been identified are being undervalued. At first sight it might appear that whatever the desired benefit the necessary first step is participation. Unfortunately this assessment is only partial on at least three counts.

i. Some sports may be relatively poor at providing the intensity of activity necessary to deliver the kind of cardio-vascular returns that seem to set the current 'gold standard' of participation. Stamina and flexibility may be better delivered by different sports. Equally, some sports may make a major contribution to social and psychological wellbeing while falling short in cardio-vascular terms.

ii. The social and psychological benefits may be derived from lower frequencies of involvement. Granovetter (1973) among others has highlighted the strength of 'weak ties' in binding contemporary society and offering valuable social support. To those ends it may be that playing tennis with one group of people half a dozen times in the summer and pool with a fluctuating set of people each Wednesday lunchtime from November to February provide important connectivity.

iii. Moreover, these social and psychological benefits may be delivered just as well by spectating and volunteering in sport as by participation in the activity itself.

Take the matter seriously – The message is clear and should provide a wake-up call for Sport England and the sporting community generally. Such a large (and growing) part of the population (18 million aged 60+ by 2026 and a further 8 million if the threshold is taken as 50) cannot be left out of the reckoning if Sport England is serious about substantially increasing the nation's participation levels.

Maximise continuity – in terms of the current sporting infrastructure it is easier to intervene to keep people participating in sport and physical activity than it is to win new converts. This will not be enough to meet the targets but may offer a sensible starting point. Sports bodies need to ensure that there is always an alternative to let people continue in a different capacity or at a different intensity.

Differentiate both older people and sports / physical activities – the variation within the older cohorts can only be expected to increase. Just as the 20 million already aged 50+ should not be treated as a homogeneous group, so it is wrong to see all sports as being interchangeable – different sports offer different benefits to different people. A lesson needs to be taken from marketing such that market segmentation is matched with an appreciation of a differentiated product.

Seek 'Balance' – if the mission is 'to boldly go' into new territory where sport and physical activity is currently alien, it will not be served by the intensity that accompanies elite competition. A 'lighter' ethos, set of values and language will be necessary to communicate and recruit the numbers required. Clearly it is about sport otherwise Sport England would not be involved, but a different kind of sport that starts with the needs of the individual rather than an emphasis on training, competition, development of skills and ladder of progression.

Don't 'go it alone' – As well as integration up and down through the sporting structure integration is needed horizontally/laterally with other agencies. Particularly with the previous point in mind collaboration needs to be encouraged with other agencies more familiar with this kind of challenge (whether in voluntary organisations or local authority community development). Indeed, in many case 'sport' should not be in the lead but playing a supportive role. Sports bodies have a different role to play in different types of engagement, so while they will take the lead for something like masters sport they should be supporting for something like exercise for maintaining independence.

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The family factor in sport: A review of family factors affecting sports participation

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Introduction

This review examines the influence of 'family' on sports participation. The review is one of nine commissioned by Sport England in 2003 to inform the development of a new 'Framework for Community Sport in England'. Together the reviews aim to explore the changing social, cultural and economic trends that will impact on sport in the next 10-15 years, and identify the implications of these for the drive to increase and widen sports participation.

The focus on 'the family' in this review is the first time that family influences on sport have been addressed in detail in relation to mass participation. Although many aspects of 'family' have been investigated by sports researchers over the years, little of the work undertaken to date has been specifically concerned with the implications for participation policy. This partly reflects the disciplinary origins of this research. Much of it has originated from sports psychology, and although the importance of structural changes in families has sometimes been acknowledged as the context for such research, individual studies have not been primarily concerned with making links to broader social trends. In the sociology of sport, where more attention would usually be paid to social context, 'family' as a whole simply has not featured very prominently. Something similar can be said of sports policy analysis, where social policy material relevant to sport has not attracted the attention of sports researchers.

Sports research into 'family' carried out to date has therefore made a substantial contribution to understanding of how family and sport interact as part of the social process, but has been less helpful in providing specific guidelines for how policy and practice might address the changing nature of contemporary family life. This review addresses this issue, focussing primarily on the impact of family on the participation of children, but highlighting where appropriate other aspects of family influence. Two complementary topics are addressed:

- **The family in sports research:** The first section of the review examines sports researchers' work on the family. A brief overview is provided of work which has examined the role of the family as a primary agent of sports socialisation, as a provider of practical support for sport, and as a source of differentiation in sport. The primary emphasis is on identifying studies that most directly inform policy to increase participation, and a small number of studies that provide particularly relevant empirical evidence are accordingly considered in more detail.

- **The family context for contemporary sport**: The second section of the review examines how sport may be affected by developments in family life. There is little if any sport-specific content in this section: instead, the review uses a range of contextual material to provide a detailed understanding of how the circumstances of the family may affect the practical circumstances in which sports participation does/does not occur. The section therefore first offers a reasonably detailed statistical overview of the main trends in family structure and employment. It focuses in particular on diversity and divergence in family situation, and in the cumulative impact of disadvantageous circumstances on certain types of household. A number of qualitative studies are then drawn upon to illustrate the impact of family events such as divorce and separation on everyday family life, with attention drawn to the practical significance of family change for families' ability to support sport.

- The third section concludes the review by synthesising the conclusions of the two analyses and highlighting issues to be addressed in sports policy.

The family in sports research

'The family' has long featured in sports research. Although sport-family studies have not usually been directly derived from – or funded through - specific sport policy-research agendas, several relevant themes have been addressed. Three bodies of work which are particularly useful for informing mass participation policy are those concerning:

- the family as an agent of sports socialisation
- the family as a provider of practical support for sport
- the family as a source of differentiation in sport

The family as an agent of sports socialisation

There is a substantial tradition of research into the significance of the family as a facilitator for sports participation. The main focus has been on children's participation, and the influence of 'family' - usually parents – on this. Social science analyses have examined issues such as the influence of parents in defining children's early sports experiences, and the relationship between the amount and type of sports participation undertaken by different family members (e.g. Colley, Eglinton and Elliott 1992; Cote, 1999; Kohl, 2000; Snyder and Purdy, 1982; Weiss and Hayashi, 1995; Woolger and Power, 1993; Yang, Telama and Laasko,1996). They have concluded that the family is a critical agent of sports socialisation, and the main agent in children's earliest years.

The family is particularly significant as a conduit for *primary* socialisation, the initial process through which children come to define their own identity and learn the rules and norms of the society of which they are part. During primary socialisation into sport, this learning process includes the development of social skills that range from 'ideas, attitudes and body movements associated with a given sport, such as physical attributes, skills and techniques of coordination, agility, speed power and stamina', through to 'the psychological aspects of play, sport and athleticism' (Horne, Tomlinson and Whannel, 1999). The family has substantial influence on the extent to which these primary skills are acquired.

Social theorists' views on the primacy of the family as an agent of sports socialisation has been largely borne out by empirical studies. These have shown that children whose family members participate in sport are more likely to take part themselves (e.g. Jambor, 1999; Wold and Anderssen, 1992; Yang, Telama and Laasko, 1996;), and that children's sports participation is particularly influenced by the participation status of their same-sex parent. Parents are particularly influential in early and middle childhood, and may assume different roles as children's sports talent develops (Cote, 1999). The results have not been unequivocal, however: for example, Wold and Anderssen found that children's sports participation correlates more strongly with their peers' participation than their family's, especially as children age; however, many friendships formed between 'sporty' children may themselves be building on their prior socialisation into sport within their families. Most writers have highlighted the need for more detailed research to deconstruct the influence of family and other 'significant others' on children's sports participation.

A different but complementary perspective has been adopted by researchers who have focussed not on what the family 'does' for sport, but on what being involved in sport 'does' for - or to - the family. Hellstedt (1995) refers to sport as the focus of a distinctive family system in the United States – one that is organised around children and young people's sports participation. This system is characterised by significant proportions of family time, money and emotion being invested in the sporting activities of the children in the household. Early analysis by Coakley (1987) suggested that this form of parental support for sport was associated with particular views on what constitutes 'good parenting', and underpinned by a specific ideology of family and parenthood. Sport was assumed to contribute to these notions of family and parenthood, by offering opportunities to develop family closeness and cohesion. Coakley warned at the time that these assumptions remained untested, and Harrington's (2003) recent empirical investigation reveals a more mixed picture. While all parents in her sample of Australian families valued time spent together as an important element of family life, families varied in the extent to which they considered sport contributed to this. Some had reservations, seeing sport as detracting from family unity, by absorbing children in individual activities in which their parents could not directly participate.

The broad conclusions to be drawn from research into the generic role of the family in sports socialisation are:

- that the family is of extreme importance in introducing children to sport, 'the most important influence in an athlete's life' (Hellstedt, 1995: 117);
- that the strong influence that families exert on participation may be positive or negative, as families vary in the importance they attach to sport; if this is the case, 'family' may be an important contributor to the lifetime gaps in sports participation rates;
- that detailed evidence of the process through which the family exerts this influence is however limited.

Families' practical support for children's sports participation and talent development

Theoretical perspectives that highlight the role of the family in social learning make an important contribution to understanding the significance of the family in children's sports involvement. The family is not only significant, however, for its role in transmitting values and providing role models, and a focus on these alone omits other important contributions. Although encouraging and approving children's participation is important, so too is the practical support that accompanies it.

A number of researchers have highlighted the importance of families' practical support for sport. Coakley (2001) has drawn attention to the extent to which children's sport participation at all levels is dependent on the family's ability to invest the necessary resources of money, time and personal involvement. Parents may also make a practical contribution to running their child's sport (De Knop et al, 1998), e.g. by organising activities, officiating at events, coaching, providing group transport, and contributing to fundraising events.

Some of the most detailed accounts of parents' support for their children's sport come from studies of parental support for elite performers (e.g. Donnelly, 1993; Kay, 1999; Kay and Lowrey, 2003; Kirk, Carlson, O'Connor, Burke, Davis and Glover, 1997; Kirk, O'Connor, Carlson, Burke, Davis and Glover, 1997b. Although some studies have focussed on parents-behaving-badly (e.g. by pressurising their own children (Hellstedt, 1990)), others have been helpful in documenting the fundamental day-to-day contribution made by parents. In the UK, findings from a number of recent qualitative studies (Greaves, 1999; Hepworth, 1999; Hurst, in progress; Kay and Lowrey, 2003) have shown that even at a young age, a child's involvement in competitive sport can become a commitment that gradually absorbs the whole family unit, until it determines family activities and behaviour to such an extent that it becomes the defining characteristic of family life Families in this situation refer to sport as 'a way of life' and to themselves as 'sporting families'. As one parent put it, 'Swimming used to take up a few hours a week but now without realizing it, it takes up most of our lives' (Kay, 1999).

Studies of families involved in high performance sport portray extreme situations but are useful in emphasising how participation in sport interacts with family life. At recreational participation levels, the practical support required from families is lower but is no less necessary. In Kelly's (1983) terms, the family is the 'budgeting unit' of Western societies in relation to the allocation of resources such as time and money (Kelly, 1983: 124). Families' capacity to provide these resource is likely to vary according to their circumstances, and those that face shortages may have difficulty providing children with sports participation opportunities. In summary:

- Especially during their younger years, children's involvement in sport is dependent on families' ability to provide practical support for their participation;
- Availability of family resources are likely to affect their ability to provide this support;
- Evidence-based understanding of families' capacity for meeting these needs is limited but has a high relevance to attempts to address 'family' in participation policy.

The family as a source of differentiation in sport

The highly differentiated pattern of participation in sport has long been evident from quantitative measures of sports participation. In Britain it is several decades since baseline data first revealed strong social divisions in sport – including those between men and women and between people from different social classes. In the 1990s Sport England's in-depth study of sport and ethnicity (Rowe and Champion, 2000) belatedly documented this further dimension of unequal access. This section reviews how much is known about the contribution which 'family' makes to these three divisions.

Family and gender differentiation in sports participation

The family's contribution to gender differentiation in sport is probably the best documented. Feminist analyses of sport have highlighted the role of the family in instilling gender differentiation in girls' and boys' attitudes to, and engagement in, sport and physical activity (Greendorfer, 1977, 1983; Greendorfer, Lewko and Rosengren, 1996). Research into the very early play activities of young children has shown that parents adopt gendered practices towards girl and boy children from the very earliest hours of their lives, contributing to a deeply-rooted set of gender expectations that pose obstacles to many girls' sports involvement in later years.

Gender analyses of sport have also examined the impact of family life on adult sport participation. Feminist analyses have shown how family circumstances affect women's participation, highlighting the extent to which family roles – primarily the role of mother, but sometimes that of a 'traditional' wife –

constrain women's participation (Birrell and Cole, 1994; Clough, 2001; Costa and Guthrie, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994, Kay, 2000, 2001). A small number of studies have focussed more explicitly on the relationship between individual sport/leisure behaviour on adult partnerships (Goff, Fick and Oppliger, 1997), and in particular on the impact of 'serious leisure' on marital/cohabitant relationships. Research into activities such as marathon running, where one partner is highly committed to a long-term time-consuming sports activity, have identified a number of negative impacts on relationships and on day-to-day family life (Barrell, Chamberlain, Evans, Holt and MacKean, 1989; Fick and Goff, 1996). The overall conclusion of such work has been that sport itself can be a source of constraints on women, whose time is more often invested in the participation of children or male partners than in their own.

Family and class differentiation in sports participation

The family is a major conduit for social class differentiation in sport. There are several obvious practical factors, including low income, lack of private transport, and the likelihood of living in less affluent neighbourhoods with few high quality facilities. As the level of support required from families increases, so too does the likelihood of children from certain families missing out: children from lower social class groups are especially under-represented as sports participants at high levels of performance (Rowley, 1992; English Sports Council, 1997). An additional factor affecting their absence from the talent development system is that families in lower socio-economic groups are unlikely to place their children in the private school system – another feature positively correlated with sports achievement (Rowley, 1992).

The family also contributes to class differentiation through differences in the attitudes and values it imparts. It has been suggested that working class children receive less encouragement to make constructive use of their time than their middle-class counterparts, and that middle-class parents attach greater importance to the developmental and health/safety benefits of sport. These suggestions are borne out by Harrington's (2003) study, which offers an exceptionally informative empirical analysis of class differences in family attitudes to sport.

Harrington used time budget diaries and in-depth interview to investigate differences between middle and lower income Australian families in the time spent by family members in family leisure activities, the activities that children do alone, and the ways in which parents value family leisure. Her study was partly informed by Shaw and Dawson's (2001) suggestion that many parents 'use' family leisure to develop family cohesion and to provide opportunities for children to learn what parents hope would become life-long values. In relation to sport, her main findings were that there was little difference between children of low- and middle-income families in the time spent participating in physically active leisure, but marked differences in the time devoted specifically to sport, and the context in which sports participation took place:

- The total amount of physical activity and sport done by children during the diary week did not differ much: children of middle income families participated for 17.6 hours and children of lower income families for an average of 17.2 hours.

- Lower income children spent much less of this time in sport than children in middle income families (4.8 hours, compared to 10.4 hours), including less time in organized sport (3.4 hours, compared to 9 hours);

- Lower income children spent more time engaged in physical activity other than sport with no parents present (10.4 hours) compared to children of middle income families (3.8 hours).

Overall, Harrington's time-budget data suggested that efforts to facilitate children's leisure activity through structured, organised after-school sport were more characteristic of middle class families (Harrington, 2003: 11). Her interview data provided some explanation of how these differences arose, indicating that 'Parents in the middle income group saw it as their 'parental responsibility' to involve and encourage their children in organised sport, both as an antidote to passive leisure activities like watching television and playing computer games, but also to inculcate life-long values'. By contrast, 'among the lower income sample parents appear to be more concerned with keeping the family together through shared leisure activity rather than facilitating the sport and leisure interests of individual family members'. A quotation from a low-income mother whose daughter had participated in gymnastics from the ages of 4 to 11 suggested that some parents in this group actually held quite explicit, negative views about the impact of sport on families:

> *"I just think it's important for all of us to do a lot of things together as a family. Another thing about gym [gymnastics] is that [our daughter] went off for three hours at a time on her own. She quite often didn't have tea with the family. And I really resented that. Because I like to do a lot of things as a family. But I felt…jealous. I think, that they're taking my child away for three hours and I want her back. Well, I think that's their childhood memories. They're going to be the family together, doing things together. Rather than, 'I went to gym, I don't know what the rest of the family did when I was a child.' I don't like the way certain sports split the family up."* (Mother, lower income family)

Harrington's findings offer valuable insights into the influence of families on children's sports participation. Her study also highlights the lack of equivalent data for families in this country and identify several questions worth pursuing in the British context. The potential to address these through equivalent research is considered in the concluding section of the report.

Family and ethnic differentiation in sports participation

Issues surrounding under-representation of black and Indian young people in sport in Britain have been under-researched. The first substantial quantitative study (Rowe and Champion, 2000) was published almost 30 years after the other major social structural divisions in sport were documented. While there has been an active strand of sociology of sport research into the relationship between sport and race, this has provided important insights into the broader social context of sport participation but little detailed evidence of how sports participation patterns are established.

To date there have been no specific studies of the extent to which families in Britain's black and minority ethnic communities contribute to children's sports socialisation process. The non-white population is diverse, with marked differences between different cultural groups that include very different family ideologies and living arrangement. There is some evidence that among groups that value 'family' highly and in which traditional family units based on marriage predominate, the strong primacy given to 'family' may act as a constraint to sports participation. On-going research by Kay and Lowrey (2002) into the sports involvement of Bangladeshi young people has identified some resistance among the parent generation to their children's involvement in sport. Young women living in the parental home face greater pressure than many of their white counterparts to contribute to the running of the household, and may have responsibility for caring for younger siblings or, in 3-generation households, their grandparents. Young men and young women may also be expected to work in the family business, especially in low-income families where they are an important economic resource. In both cases, many parents do not particularly value sport as an activity, placing greater store by young people undertaking work that contributes to the income or domestic comfort of the family, or preferring them to invest their time to further their education.

A contrasting scenario arises in the UK black community. A key factor here, considered in greater detail in the next section, is the predominance of one-parent families. The majority of black children are being raised in one-parent households headed by a woman. This household structure combines several factors associated with low sports participation, including a non-white female head-of-household; a woman who is a mother; a statistically high likelihood of low income; and the absence of a male parent. These factors are likely to limit both the value attached to sport and the practical resources available for it, and make it unlikely that these families will be able to play a very positive role in children's sports socialisation.

Summary: the family and differentiation in sport

On the basis of the existing research base, the overall conclusions to be drawn concerning the family's contribution to differentiation in sport would appear to be:

- that on the one hand, there are considerable indications that the family does make a substantial contribution to life-long differentiation in sports participation between different social groups; *but*
- that with the exception of the family's impact on gender differentiation, which is relatively well-researched, there is limited empirical evidence of how this process occurs and especially, to what extent it is the product of differences in families' practical circumstances, and/or differences in the value they attach to sport.

Informing future policy: conclusions from sports research into 'family'

It would be misleading to suggest that 'family' has been omitted from sports research as whole. In terms of informing participation policy, however, there is a need for analyses to be further developed.

The main deficiency in work to date has been the limited linkages made between sports research and the development of the family as a social institution. Most sports research into 'family' assumes the traditional model of the family (parents living with each other and their shared biological children), with little attention paid to other family forms. There is an overall tendency for 'family' to be treated uncritically, as a fairly one-dimensional construct, rather than as a complex and variable social institution. This is greatly at odds with the diversity of contemporary family life, and contrasts with the more sensitive construction of 'family' in other social policy areas.

The issue is important not just for reasons of academic rigour, but because of its practical relevance to participation policy. It is important that sport-specific issues are placed in their broader context. Issues such as, for example, the role of families in providing financial support for children's sport, need to be considered in relation to the distribution of family income between different family types. As different family structures are associated with different family lifestyles and different resources, the ability of families to provide the support needed for sport participation is likely to vary between different types of family. As Rojek (1995: 64 – 65) has commented,

'The logical and practical requirement of this argument is that researchers and planners open themselves up to the variety of family forms and produce a more relevant connection between leisure-suppliers and leisure-users.'

In summary, the conclusions to be drawn from existing sports research are that:

- Although 'family' has been identified as a very substantial influence on sports participation, especially for children, it has not been addressed in sports policy;
- The research evidence that does exist has some significant limitations, especially in its uncritical treatment of the concept of 'family', and the lack of empirical evidence of the process through which differences in families' situations may affect their capacity to support sport, and the outcomes of such differences for participation;
- There is the potential for a much fuller and sensitive analysis of the relationship between sport and family, which acknowledges the fluid and varied nature of contemporary families, and addresses the implications of this for sport.

The next section of the review documents in some detail the current trends and patterns in family life that have implications for sport.

The contemporary family

Many features of contemporary family life have not been directly addressed in sport. This contrasts with other social policy areas in which the family is recognised as a central social institution and a primary vehicle for social change. It is through the family that changes at the macro level - such as labour market restructuring and polarisation, changing gender relations, and changing patterns of family formation and dissolution - manifest themselves in the everyday lives of children and adults. They are evident in patterns of men and women's work hours, in the distribution of household income, in arrangements for the division of domestic labour, and in household size and composition.

Family circumstances affect the demands placed upon families, and the human, financial and time resources available to meet them. These are all factors that may affect family members' capacity to participate in sport. This section of the review examines data on current trends in family life that have consequences for sport.

Overview: change and diversity in contemporary families

Contemporary family life in Britain is characterised by change and by increased diversity. The last three decades have seen significant changes in the way families fulfil their two primary roles – their caring and economic functions. The circumstances under which family members now undertake their activities, either collectively or individually, differ in comparison to previous generations, and also between different subgroups within the population.

Some of the most conspicuous changes affecting families have been changes in their structure, composition and development. Families have become less stable, with households and individuals increasingly likely to experience transitions from one family form to another. Today's children and adults therefore live in more diverse forms of household than previous generations – a consequence of:

- A decline in marriage (fewer and later marriages; higher levels of unmarried cohabitation)
- rising divorce rates
- increased lone parenthood
- increased numbers of reconstituted households (step-families)

Alongside these changes in the patterns of emotional relationships, expectations of parenting are becoming less gender differentiated. Male and female parents are experiencing changes in their parenting role:

- higher expectations of women combining motherhood with paid work; and
- higher expectations of involvement in child-rearing by fathers

These changes in parental roles have brought a range of pressures to bear on the family unit. The unequal distribution of employment across household types has led to households in different situations facing contrasting problems in their attempts to reconcile work and family life:

- time-stress among dual-earner 'work-rich' households
- low-income among 'work-poor' households

The overall impact of changes in the emotional and economic circumstances of family life has been complex. Many trends have been interrelated, with multiple effects on households that have deepened the divide between families.

Trends and patterns in family building and household employment

In the UK, the 'traditional' family form of both parents living with their biological children has been in (numerical) decline for some years. Although most children (approximately 70%) continue to be brought up in households headed by their own parents (Lewis, 2000:1], the proportion of families headed by a couple has fallen. One-parent families have correspondingly risen, from 8% of households with dependent children in 1971 to 24% in 2002. Most (22%) are headed by lone mothers and 3% by lone fathers. In total almost one-quarter (23%) of children were living in a lone parent family in 2001 [Living in Britain 2002: GHS 2001:11].

Together these changes have had a considerable effect on the nature of family life in Britain, with some types of households typically experiencing more difficult family circumstances than others. At a practical level, families vary in the demands made upon them (e.g. the number of children) and their ability to meet them (e.g. number of adults providing income/time; age/experience of parents). The quality of emotional life in families is also variable, with transitions such as separation, divorce, and the formation of new households often having a number of negative effects. The next sections examine diversity in contemporary family life in Britain, paying particular attention to the situations in which families are under increasing pressure.

Diversity in family structure and composition

The traditional two-parent family is enduring most among higher social class groups. It is families in lower social classes, and in some black and minority ethnic communities, that are most likely to live in other types of family household and to experience transitions between different household structures. On average, women in lower social groups have larger families, have them earlier, and are more likely to embark on motherhood as single parent, and/or experience lone parenthood as a consequence of divorce/separation later (Dale and Egerton, 1997). Family demands on lower-class families are therefore high and in many cases increasing, with the most direct effects being felt by women (Box 1). This presents a formidable challenge to strategies to engage this notoriously low-participant group in sport.

There are also strong contrasts between cultural groups. Cultural diversity is increasing in Britain, with substantial black and minority ethnic communities concentrated in a relatively small number of towns

and cities, in some of which they make up the majority of residents. Members of these communities are often multiply disadvantaged, and at greater risk from social exclusion than the white population (Social Exclusion Unit, 2000). They also differ from the white population and from each other in the circumstances of their family life:

- More than nine-tenths (92%) of Indian households with dependent children in the UK are headed by a married couple. The proportion of lone parent households is 7% - less than a third of the national figure (Office for National Statistics, Social Trends 33).
- Among the Black Caribbean community two-parent families are in the minority (34%). One-parent families predominate (54%) - twice as high as for the country as a whole, and 7- 8 times higher than among the British Indian community (Office for National Statistics, Social Trends 33).

Box 1 Social class variations in family structure

Analysis of social class differences in family characteristics is hindered by limited availability of data. Very little 'family' statistical data is published disaggregated by social class categories, or by relevant proxy measures such as occupational classifications, education level or income. Currently one of the best UK sources is Dale and Egerton's (1997) analysis of data on highly qualified women from the National Child Development Study (NCDS). The dataset relates only to women who were 33 in 1991, but is invaluable in identifying differences in the family circumstances of women of different educational levels, and highlighting the distinctive features of less-educated women's family situations.

- Motherhood is more common among lower-educated women: among the NCDS cohort, the great majority (84%) of lower-educated women had had children, compared to 55% of higher- educated women.

- Larger families are more common among lower-educated women. Lower –educated women are almost twice as likely to have two or more children (66% compared to 35%), and more than three times as likely to have 3 or more (27% compared to 8%).

- Young motherhood is more common among lower-educated women. Two-thirds of lower-educated women had had their first child by the age of 25, compared to 15% of those with higher education.

- Divorce is most likely among those who marry young and/or have a pre-marital child, both of which are more common among lower social class groups [Social Trends 31, 2001: 38].

- Lone parenthood is highest lower-educated mothers. In the NCDS cohort, this was 5 times more common among lower-educated women than amongst highest educated women.

- Teenage motherhood is associated with low levels of education. Most teenage mothers leave school young (20% before the age of 16 and 53% at age 16), with few qualifications (26% with none and 49% below 'A' level.

- *All data from Dale and Egerton (1997) unless otherwise specified*

Family transitions

An important feature of contemporary family life is that families are now less stable and more likely to undergo transitions from one family structure to another. Kelly (1983) suggested nearly two decades ago that family transitions of almost any sort were likely to have fundamental implications for leisure:

> '*Transitions that break the family and marriage, such as death, separation and divorce, have a sharp impact on leisure companionship. All the taken-for-granted associations that accompany the normal family lifecycle are upset. Previous patterns of intrafamilial interaction are broken. While a new sense of freedom may also be experienced as [old] roles are abandoned or lost,*

the removal of availability, 'role comfort' and so much of the social support for leisure requires for most a serious process of adaptation'. (Kelly, 1983: 136)

Many contemporary 'non-traditional' families come into being through the dissolution or extension of a previous household. These transitions can have a number of emotional and practical impacts.

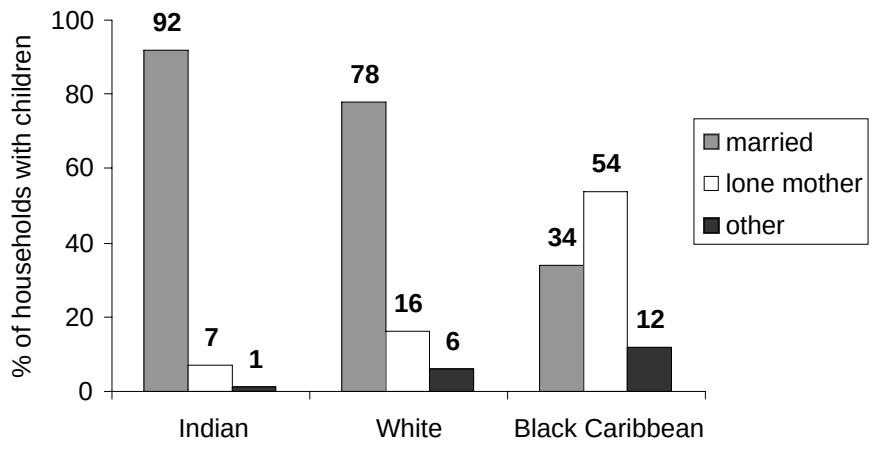
Trinder, Beek and Connolly's (2002) qualitative study of children's and parents' experience of contact after divorce highlighted the complex household activity patterns that can result from separation/divorce. Contact arrangements were only 'working' in less than half of the families studied (27 out of 61). In families where contact arrangements did not work, poor relationships could cause stress that could spill over into other areas of life:

> *'The whole family usually gets, well not upset, but uptight about it. I feel I have to make the most of mum before I leave the house, before I leave to go with dad. I feel a bit more sad than happy because every time I go with my dad then when I come back dad and mum always have an argument when mum comes to pick me up or something like that'* (Child 7-9)

> *'We don't know what [mother] looks like anymore. Every time when she's promised to come round, she keeps on lying which makes me sad… ever since she kept on lying I just kept on getting annoyed and then getting annoyed at school, disrupting my education and that lot* (Child 13-15).

Contact arrangements following separation/divorce are likely to complicate family activity patterns. Children's activities may become fragmented through the complexities of sharing their lives between two or more households, especially when the adults heading these households are unable to collaborate constructively. The resident parent may actively obstruct the contact parent's access to the children, and/or the contact parent fail to turn up for their arranged access. All of these factors may make it particularly hard for these households to plan their free time activities. The combination of this with the resource constraints typical of these households (limited money, limited parental time, and low levels of private transport) pose obstacles to providing opportunities for children to participate in sport, especially on a regular basis.

Figure.1 Family structure by ethnic group, % of households with dependent children



Source: Office for National Statistics, Living in Britain 2001

'Reconstituted' (step-) families can also face other difficulties. Ferri and Smith (1998) found that despite relatively high employment rates among adults, step-families usually had lower income than first families. They were unlikely to use formal childcare, with parents relying on each other or on grandparents to provide this. Stepfamilies spent as much time together 'as a family' as first families, but were less likely to participate in out-of-home activities incurring direct costs. The quality of emotional life was also often poorer in stepfamilies: adults in stepfamilies were more likely to be

unhappy with their relationship than adults in a first family, and on average expressed lower life satisfaction. The overall picture to emerge from the research was of a family situation that was often beset by multiple difficulties.

Wade and Smart (2002) examined how young (primary-school) children cope with change in their families generally. The majority (70%) of children who experience divorce are in this age-group. They found diversity in how children responded, with some (usually those from more privileged backgrounds) regaining a sense of stability relatively quickly after divorce/separation. For children who were escaping adverse situations, the change was even welcomed:

> *'I always wanted [just] my mum 'cos my dad, he never did anything for me… He used to get in the bedroom, lock me out of the bedroom and never care and just hit my mum... I [don't] ever want to see him again and never because of what he's done to my mum and me' (C, girl, 6)*

Many children were however quite bereft by the departure of one parent:

> *'Every time I go to bed I think this is all a dream… One day I'll wake and say 'Hi Mum' and Dad will be there and I'll say, 'Dad, what are you doing here?' I know it's not true. I think to myself, 'What are you talking about JJ?' but I wish…and just think in my mind, 'I hope it's true'. (J, boy, 10)*

Rodgers and Pryor (1998) have shown that the negative impacts of divorce and separation can have very long-term effects on children. Their research confirms the strong link between family breakdown and relative deprivation, with children at high risk of being in poverty and living in poor housing. The impact on overall life chances could be far-reaching: children whose parents separate are more likely to perform poorly at school, to leave home young, to become sexually active, pregnant or a parent at an early age, and to be poor when they are adults. This is a difficult environment for sports participation to flourish in, at any life stage.

While direct personal experience of some family transitions can be painful for the children and adults concerned, such transitions are nonetheless becoming accepted as commonplace events. This is particularly the case in some low-income communities where rates of lone parenthood and family breakdown are particularly high. Morrow's (1998) study of children's perspectives on families showed that many have a sophisticated yet taken-for-granted understanding of the fact that family life can take diverse forms. Whether family members actually live together as a 'nuclear' family may be a secondary issue:

> *'A family is a group of people which all care about each other. They can all cry together, laugh together and go through all emotions together. Some live together as well'.* (Girl, 13)

In some senses, therefore, family bonds – including teenagers' deep appreciation of their relatives! – endure (Gillies, Ribbens McCarthy and Holland, 2001):

> *'They're sort of the people you're stuck with'.* (White working class teenage woman)

Diversity in family employment and income

Changes in the labour market are an important component of family change. Like changes in family structure, they too are characterised by diversity, minority trends, and cumulative disadvantage concentrated on certain groups.

Family labour market activity

Although there have been many changes in household employment patterns over the last three decades (Appendix), it is the rise in mothers' employment that has been the most significant for family life overall. Maternal employment has increased very rapidly - at twice the rate for women as a whole - but with sharp variations between social groups. Mothers in professional/ managerial occupations are now almost 20 times more likely to be employed full-time when their youngest child is under 5, than mothers in unskilled occupations (Table 1). When children are older, the ratio is lower but the percentage gap higher: the majority of mothers in the highest occupational group work full-time, while only 1-in-10 of mothers in socio-economic group 5 does.

Variation in maternal employment rates has contributed to the polarisation of work between 'work-rich' and 'work-poor' households:

- Most working-age households are now ‘work-rich’ – i.e. have all members of the household of working age in employment. The UK has the highest proportion of dual-earner households in Europe (Franco and Winqvist, 2002).

- The majority (58%) of two-parent households with dependent children are now dual-earner households (Office for National Statistics, Social Trends 33).

- The most common work pattern for dual-earner couples is for the man to work full-time and the woman to work part-time. In Britain, 40% of couples with children do this. The remainder split almost equally between couples in which only one parent works (29.8 per cent) and those in which both work full-time (28.6 per cent) (Franco and Winqvist, 2000).

Table 1. Full-time maternal employment rates, by socio-economic group

	SEG1 - prof./managerial	SEG5 - unskilled
mothers employed full-time, youngest child < 5	36%	2%
mothers employed full-time, youngest child < 16	60%	10%

Source: Living in Britain 2002

- A small proportion of households are ‘work-poor’ or ‘workless’, i.e. households in which no one is in employment (Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Trends January 2001).

- One-parent households have the greatest tendency to be workless: 44.8% of households headed by a lone parent were workless in 2000 (Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Trends January 2001).

- A small proportion of couple households with dependent children are also workless. In 2000, 5.5 per cent of couples with dependent children were workless, almost half the rate a decade earlier (9.1 per cent in 1992) (Office for National Statistics, Labour Market Trends January 2001).

Family income

The polarised distribution of employment across work-rich and work-poor households has obvious implications for family income. There is also a strong link between household income and family structure.

The highest family incomes are those of work-rich family households, and those of two-parent households supported by a single-earner in a highly-paid occupation – in other words, families that by definition combine higher social class with ‘traditional’ family structure. As we have seen, these households appear to also have other ‘favourable’ characteristics, including low family size and later parenthood. Although there are some negative aspects, notably the time-crunch experienced by dual-earners (discussed below), in theory these households are relatively well-resourced.

The households most at risk of low income are those in low social class groups, including many members of black and minority ethnic groups. There are a high proportion of one-parent and step-families in this group: lone parenthood, separation/divorce, and living as a step-family all correlate with reduced and usually low household income. In the case of single and lone parents, this directly reflects low employment rates in one-parent households, especially when the household is headed by a woman. Among step-families both adults are usually in paid work but often in low-income occupations. New stepfamilies may also face a period of increased costs if their members are also contributing to the costs of a previous shared home.

The overall pattern of household income is:

- Married couples with children have the highest incomes and lone parents have the lowest (Figure 2).

- Incomes among one-parent households are often very low (Figure 3), and there is a high risk of lone parents being in poverty.

- Low incomes are most common in one-parent households headed by a woman, and especially those headed by a 'single' (never-married, often teenage) young mother (Figure 3).

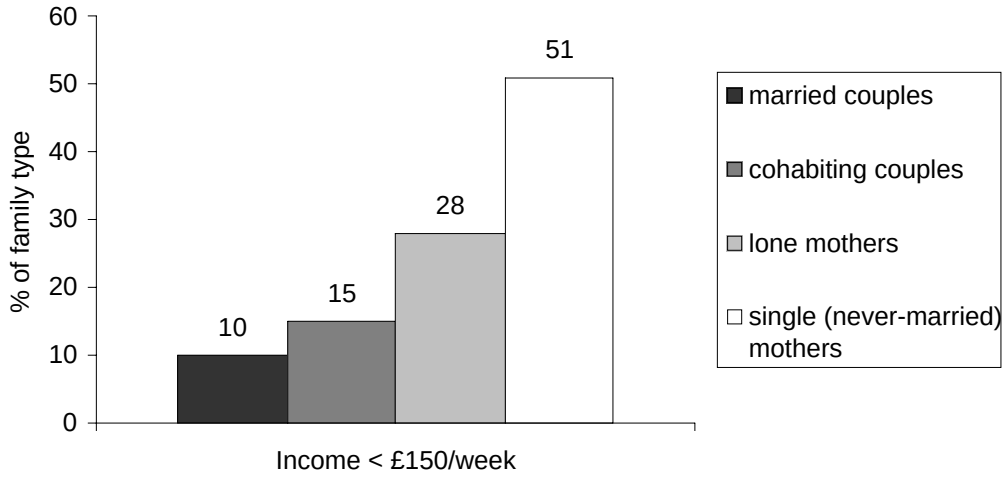
- Children are disproportionately present in low-income households: 21% (2.7 million) living in households with <60% of median income in GB in 2000/01 (Office for National Statistics, Social Trends No.33).

- Overall, approximately one-in 8 households with dependent children (13.1per cent in 2002) are workless, meaning that 1.9 million children live in households with no earned income (Office for National Statistics, Social Trends No.33).

Figure 2 High weekly income in households with dependent children, by family type

Source: Living in Britain 2002, 11

Figure 3 Low weekly income in households with dependent children, by family type



Source: Living in Britain 2002, 11-12

Family work hours

Changes in men and women's employment patterns have had implications for household work hours. On average household work hours have increased but with obvious differences between 'work-rich' and 'work poor' households. Issues have arisen for families in terms of the increased demands on each parent, the overall work hours of the household, and also the pattern of work hours.

Most of the attention paid to the increasing demands on parents has focussed on the situation of working mothers. Full-time working mothers have been identified as the population group most prone to stress, and feminist analyses in particular have shown that mothers' increased paid work hours have not been counterbalanced by a corresponding reduction in time spent on domestic labour. Much has also been made of the failure of male partners to assume an appropriate share of childcare and domestic responsibilities. Positive attitudes to shared childcare are stronger among well-qualified fathers than those with low qualifications, although Ferri and Smith (1996) have shown that in practice it is in lower class families that men are most likely to share childcare, sometimes out of the necessity to provide cover for working wives. In all classes, however, the main responsibility for caring for children falls to their mothers. Mothers who work are increasingly constrained by time demands, to an extent that may be damaging to their well-being.

The situation of fathers has been given rather less attention, although recent research has begun to address this. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's review of research into fatherhood in Britain (Lewis, 2000) emphasised the importance of fathers in the lives of children. Seventy per cent of children live with their fathers and of those who don't, 70% have contact – but fathers themselves feel under increasing pressure to fulfil modern expectations of their role. Like mothers, fathers appear to be facing new responsibilities without shedding much of their old ones. Thus, the expectation that fathers will have much greater involvement in caring for their children sits alongside the traditional pressure to be the main wage earner. With fathers working longer hours than men who do not have children, and British fathers working longer hours than most other fathers in Europe, it is unsurprising that they are more likely than childless men to report stress and general dissatisfaction. When fathers in Warin, Solomon, Lewis and Langford's (1999) research were asked what was expected of them today, their answers highlighted the pressures fathers felt: '*Too bloody much', 'An awful lot', 'All singing, all dancing'.*

The obvious consequence of net increases in paid and domestic labour by each parent is overall 'time-crunch' on dual-earner families (Gillis, 2001; Kay, 1998). The issue is particularly acute in Britain, where full-time workers in almost all occupational groups work the longest hours in Europe (Table 2). Work hours tend to be longest at the two extremes of the scale – among high status professional/ managerial workers vulnerable to the 'long work hours' culture, and among low-paid workers who may work additional hours out of financial necessity. In addition to their long work day, British workers are also more likely than their European counterparts to be required to work at 'non-standard' hours which encroach on evening, night and weekend time (Figure 4).

High work hours among high earners have particular relevance to sport policymakers because they affect the traditional high-participation sectors of the population. In all other respects, these households are the best-resourced for sports participation: they have relatively high income, high levels of car ownership, the parents themselves are likely to be current or former sports participants, and the family as a whole commonly values sport. It is evident, however, that these families face increasing time constraints to their own and their children's participation. Taylor (2003) has drawn attention to the increasing tendency for parents to adopt a 'pay and play'/'childminding' attitude to voluntary sector sports clubs, rather than offering an active contribution to running them. While it is not clear whether 'time crunch' will prove a serious obstacle to sports participation among a group that values sport highly as an element of good parenting, Taylor's evidence suggests that some adverse impact is likely.

Issues also arise from the *pattern* of parental work hours – i.e. when in the day they occur, and how (in two-parent families) the work hours of each parent relate to those of the other. High work hours can themselves cause problems, with the extended work hours of one or both parents cutting into 'family' time. This usually reduces the time that all family members can spend together, typically during evenings and at weekends. Additional problems arise from families in which parents work 'non-traditional' hours, often to accommodate 'shift-parenting'. In these situations, parents may deliberately work different hours from each other so that one parent is always available to provide childcare. This situation shares some of the features of a one-parent household: with only one parent available, there may be a limit to the capacity for children's activities, including sport – and very strong constraints on personal free-time activities for both parents. As shift-parenting is most likely to be undertaken by low-

income families unable to purchase commercial childcare, this situation may be exacerbated by other resource constraints.

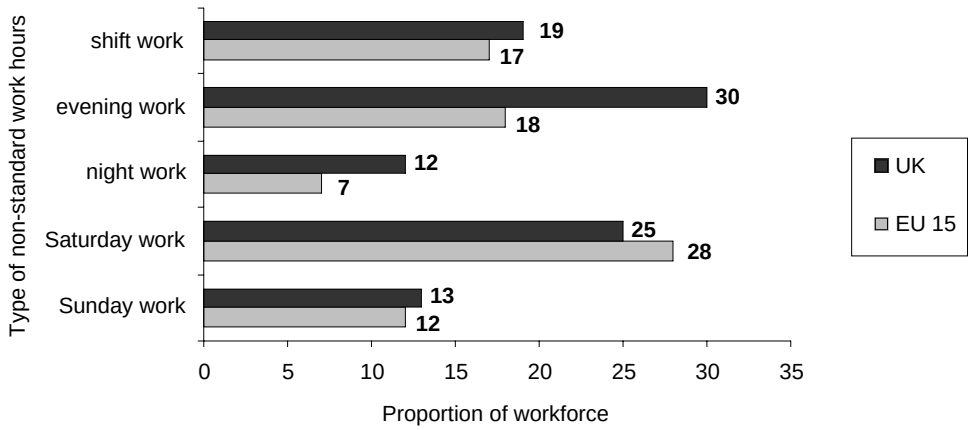
There is little question that both of these problems – high work hours and 'non-traditional' work hours - are exacerbated by the system of childcare provision in Britain. Although the Blair governments have taken a relatively interventionist approach by British standards, their policy initiatives have been narrowly focussed and limited, and British state-provided childcare remains among the lowest in Europe (Department for Education and Employment, 1998; Gornick Meyers and Ross, 1997). There is a clear correlation with British mother's employment patterns: employment levels (and work hours) are highest among women who can afford commercial childcare provision, and lowest amongst those who cannot. Low-income families are likely to rely on informal care by each parent, by other family members (e.g. grandparents), and by friends and neighbours, and to use this type of care to support relatively low work hours.

Table 2. Usual hours worked by full-time employees, by occupation

	EU-15, all	EU-15, males	UK, all		UK, males	
			%	rank	%	rank
Legislators, managers	44.6	45.5	46.8	1	48.1	1
Professionals	39.5	40.9	45.1	1	45.1	1
Technicians	39.4	40.1	42.3	1	43.5	1
Clerks	38.8	39.4	39.3	6	40.9	1
Service, sales workers	40.5	41.7	40.8	4	43.9	2
Agriculture/fishery w	41.4	41.8	43.0	4	43.1	3
Craft/related trades	40.1	40.2	44.5	1	44.6	1
Plant, machine operators	40.8	41.2	45.3	1	46.3	1
Elementary operators	40.1	40.8	43.4	1	44.5	1
Armed forces	41.2	41.2	44.9	2	45.0	2

Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2001

Figure 4 Non-standard' work hours: EU and UK comparison



Source: Eurostat Labour Force Survey 2001, Table 42, p152-153

Informing future policy: conclusions from research into contemporary families

Families are becoming increasingly diverse in structure and circumstances. This means there is now greater variation in the social institution that plays a pivotal role in instigating and supporting sports

participation. In many cases, contemporary families are experiencing increasing pressures, many of which have rather negative implications for sports participation. Two broad scenarios require consideration by sports policymakers:

- There is a strong pattern of cumulative disadvantage affecting a substantial minority of the population. The groups affected are sport's prominent low/no participants. The combined household and employment situations of these groups are major sources of constraints upon them.

- There are also increasing pressure on families' in traditionally well-resourced groups. High-income households, among whom sports participation is high, are increasingly affected by time shortage. This is also a problem facing lower-income households in which mothers and fathers 'shift-parent' to meet the demands of paid work and childcare.

Responding to family change: policy implications for sport

The first two sections of this review of the relationship between sports participation and contemporary family life have shown that:

- 'Family' has been widely recognised as a substantial influence on sports participation: the family is a primary agent of sports socialisation, a provider of practical support for sport, and a source of differentiation in sport.

- The research evidence that exists has some significant limitations, however, especially in its uncritical treatment of the concept of 'family' and of the practical and attitudinal differences in families' situations that may affect their capacity to support sport. In general there is an absence of up-to-date empirical sports research that incorporates, in any way at all, 'family'.

- Deficiencies in the research base are paralleled in sports policy, where the family has rarely been addressed at all. It is particularly notable that sport, in contrast to other social policy areas, has paid little attention to growing evidence of change and divergence in family life, and the linkages between this and individual's life styles and life chances.

- One of the features of current divergence between families is the strong tendency for 'demanding' family circumstances to be concentrated on significant minorities in the population. These groups have experienced the least favourable consequences of family change and the least favourable consequences of labour market restructuring.

- The social groups most likely to face difficulties in family life include ethnic minority groups, lower social classes, and households headed by women. All of these are groups among whom sports involvement is low. It is particularly important for participation levels to be substantially raised among these sectors if the targets now being proposed for higher national participation rates are to be met. It will be particularly difficult to achieve these increases if the day-to-day situations faced by many contemporary families are not addressed.

It therefore seems important to ensure that future mass participation sports policy includes consideration of 'family'. This may not be too difficult. The relevance of 'family' to sports participation has a commonsense logic to which most people are receptive, and although relevant sport-family research is limited, data on the family itself is not. The fact that families are changing and diverging in ways that have practical implications for sport can be easily proven from the many up-to-date, readily available social policy datasets and research reports that focus on these issues. Addressing them in sport is therefore partly a question of raising awareness of the importance of family change, and partly a question of forging convincing links between this and sports participation. Two initial steps can contribute to this:

- Asserting the relevance of family to sports participation policy and incorporating the 'family factor' in analyses of participation and in the policy initiatives they inform. An important element of this is ensuring that 'family' is not treated as a discrete variable but that its influence on already recognised phenomena such as social class and ethnicity is made explicit.

- Routinely drawing on the available social science database to provide analyses of ‘family’ as an element of the changing social, cultural and economic environment to which sports policy is responding.

Introducing analyses of this sort will represent a major development in defining ‘family’ as an element of the ‘problem’ to be addressed by sports policy. Building on this to provide evidence-based *solutions* for this problem is more problematic, given the lack of empirical research. Recent studies of the role of the family in facilitating sports participation do exist in the UK, but not in relation to general participation, and not in relation to all family types. Although a certain amount can be deduced - as in this report - by drawing on the most closely related available evidence on other topics, there is little escaping the fact that there is a significant gap in the research base.

The absence of research which specifically links ‘sport’ to appropriate ‘family’ variables can be tackled at two levels: by routinely including ‘family’ as a standard variable within sports participation research, and by undertaking specific research into the family-sport relationship. Linking ‘family’ and ‘sport’ within sport participation research may be done in two ways:

- Future quantitative research, e.g. of the type undertaken for Sport England’s surveys of participation among young people and in relation to ethnicity, could usefully incorporate appropriate indicators of family circumstances. The most important measures to include would be *family structure* (whether a one- or two-parent household), family *work status* (number of earners), and *social class* (based on parental occupation or education level). As far as possible, standardised categorisations used in national and European social statistics should be adopted.

- There is some potential to undertake secondary analysis of national (General Household Survey) sports participation statistics at the household level: the data set is structured appropriately. GHS data does not however include measures of children’s sports participation, which limits its usefulness for informing sports policy. It does however record the presence of children in the household, allowing comparisons to be made between adults’ sports participation in one- and two-parent households. This type of analysis may be particularly useful if correlated with other characteristics such as social class and ethnicity.

Quantitative analysis of this type should identify relationships between sport and family characteristics but will have limited power to explain them. A full account of the role of sport in contemporary family life, and the influence of contemporary family life on sport, will require more specific research into these issues. Such work need not be large-scale: in-depth qualitative research is widely used within family-related social policy research, with typical sample sizes of less than 100 and sub-samples of 20 – 30. In the sports context, Harrington’s (2003) research (discussed in the first section) into 18 Australian families has already shown that a small-scale but well-designed study can illuminate a diverse range of previously undocumented practical and attitudinal issues affecting sports participation.

Harrington’s study of differences in the sports participation of children from different family backgrounds focused solely on social class comparisons, but the issues she addressed can equally be pursued in relation to a broader range of differences including class, ethnicity and family circumstances. This would be an appropriate approach to take to capture the fluid and varied nature of contemporary families in the UK, and the implications of this for sport. Such work should address two issues:

- whether differences in family circumstances are associated with differences in participation levels in sport; and

- the extent to which differences in sports participation in different family circumstances, reflect differences in practical resources, and/or differences in attitudes to sport, parenting and family life.

Improving knowledge and understanding of these two issues should allow sports policymakers to address the two fundamental questions: how exactly does ‘family’ affect sports participation? And what can sports policy do about it?

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Patterns of family formation		
Trend		Impacts
Decline in marriage	Between 1979 and 2001, the proportion of women aged 18 to 49 who were married declined from 74% to 50% [Living in Britain 2002: GHS 2001: 6)	*Low-educated women most likely to marry, especially young*
Increase in cohabitation	The proportion of single women aged 18- 49, who were cohabiting quadrupled from 8% in 1979 to 35% in 2001 [Living in Britain 2002: GHS 2001: 6)	*High-educated women most likely to cohabit*
Smaller families and later childbearing	*The average age for first births within marriage increased from 24.0 in 1971 to 29.6. [Social Trends No.33: 2003 edition: 51].*	*Low-educated women have more children and have them younger*
Increase in marriage breakdown	*Annual divorce rates rose more than 600% from 1961 - 1999, from 2.1 to 12.9 per 1000 married population. [Social Trends 31, 2001: 38].*	*Low-educated women most likely to divorce*
Decline in two-parent households	*The proportion of these 'traditional' families has fallen but most children (approximately 70%) continue to be brought up in households headed by their own two biological parents {Lewis, 2000:1]*	*Two-parent households most common in higher social groups and white population*
Increase in one-parent families	*One-parent families rose from 8% of households with dependent children in 1971 to 24% in 2002. Most (22%) are headed by lone mothers and 3% by lone fathers. Almost one-quarter (23%) of children were living in a lone parent family in 2001 [Living in Britain 2002: GHS 2001:11].*	Lone parenthood highest among low-educated women; very high in black community
Increase in teenage lone parenthood	*The proportion of 'single' (never-married) parents has grown most. The teenage pregnancy rate is a particular concern in the UK. It is far higher than elsewhere in western Europe, where teenage birth rates have fallen rapidly since the 1970s. In 2000, the UK's teenage pregnancy rate of 29 live births per 1000 girls aged 15-19 was more than two-fifths higher than the next highest rate in Europe (Portugal), and four times higher than the lowest rates [Social Trends No.33: 2003 edition: 49].*	*Teenage mothers very likely to have no/low qualifications*
Increase in reconstituted/ step-families	Increases in marriage/cohabitation breakdown have led to a rise in the number of stepfamilies (also known as 'reconstituted' families), created when people with children remarry or cohabit with new partners. In 2000/01 stepfamilies accounted for 8 per cent of families in Great Britain with dependent children whose head was aged under 60. [Social Trends No.33: 2003 edition: 48].	*More common in low social class groups; exacerbates low income*

Patterns in household employment and income		
Trend		Impacts
Male employment down	Male economic activity rates decreased from 89% in 1984 to 84% in 2000. The main cause was a withdrawal from the labour market among older (50+) men [Social Trends 33, 2003: 75).	*Male employment lowest in low social class groups*
Female employment up	Female economic activity rose from 67% in 1984 to 73% in 2000. The main cause was an increase in the proportion of women employed during parenting years [Social Trends 33, 2003: 76).	*Female employment highest among highly educated women*
Convergence of male and female employment	*The gender gap in economic activity rates halved, from 22% to only 11% from 1984 - 2000. The gap in employment rates has also fallen, from 19% to 9% [Social Trends 33, 2003: 77)*	*Gap wider in low social class groups*
Divergence in women's employment	Employment rates are highest amongst white, highly qualified women and lowest among non-white women and women with low qualifications. Full-time maternal employment is up to 20 times higher for highly qualified than low qualified mothers [Social Trends 33, 2003: 75 - 79)	*Marked differences in mothers employment especially, between social classes*
Polarisation of household employment	Variation in women's employment has contributed to differences in household employment levels. There are a large number of dual-earner households and a relatively small proportion but large number of no-earner households (Franco and Winqvist, 2002:1).	*No-earner households are a significant social policy priority*
Increase in dual-earning	*'Dual-earner' households have increased throughout Europe, and most working-age households are now 'work-rich' – i.e. have all members of the household of working age in employment. (Franco and Winqvist, 2002: 1-2).*	*The UK has the highest proportion of dual-earner households in Europe country*
Pattern of dual-earner employment	*In most dual-earner couples the man works full-time and the woman works part-time. In Britain, 40% of couples with children do this. The rest split between those where only one parent works (29.8%) and those in which both work full-time (28.6%) (Franco and Winqvist, 2002: Table 2).*	Time crunch in families with higher paid work hours. Increased expectations of both parents.
Workless households	Overall, approximately one-in-8 households with dependent children (13.1per cent in 2000) are workless, meaning that 1.9 million children live in households with no earned income (Labour Market Trends January 2001: 46).	*Low income*
One parent workless households	One-parent households have the greatest tendency to be workless: 44.8% of households headed by a lone parent were workless in 2000 (Labour Market Trends January 2001: 47).	*Low income and high family demands*
Workless couple households with children	A small proportion of couple households with dependent children are also workless. In 2000, 5.5 per cent of couples with dependent children were workless, almost half the rate a decade earlier (9.1 per cent in 1993) (Labour Market Trends January 2001: 48).	*Low income hot confined to one-parent households*

Driving up Participation: Social Inclusion

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Introduction: what are social inclusion and exclusion

The inequality that had grown since 1979 under four Conservative governments had been a source of campaigning and local policies in Labour-held large cities and became a major plank of the New Labour Blair government. Social exclusion was described, now famously by the new Social Exclusion Unit in the Cabinet Office in a report on the 3,000 most deprived estates as:

> *a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown* (*Bringing Britain Together* www.Cabinet-office.gov.uk, accessed 10.11.98).

For the European Commission, Commins (1993) more analytically said it was a process leading to lack of access to one or more of four basic social systems –

i) the democratic and legal system, which promotes civic integration
ii) the labour market, which promotes economic integration
iii) the welfare system, which promotes social integration
iv) the family and community system, which promotes interpersonal integration, and includes sport, arts and culture.

He argued (1993: 4) that *when one or two* (of these) are weak, *the others need to be strong. And the worst off are those for whom all systems have failed.* Berghman (1995: 19) spoke of a *denial or non-realisation of citizenship rights.* Thus social inclusion or as the French and the EU have it, *insertion sociale*, is the policy or act of overcoming barriers such that people have more opportunity to take part.

Elsewhere, I have argued (Collins 2003), and cannot repeat too loudly or insistently here, that poverty is the core of exclusion. Age, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, physical environment and location are all factors for some but most excluded people are also poor - for example 75% of disabled people are poor because they depend on state benefits which because of their low level in the UK mean they fall below the 60% of average income which is the EU benchmark. The poor grew from 7% in 1979 - after a period when old age pensions and sickness benefits had increased faster than inflation, to a whopping 24% of the population in 1994, with little in overall rural-urban differences, though the poor are spread more thinly amongst rural affluence in the countryside and make less impact than the urban concentrations. This is a major social divide; even more worryingly, 30% of children were in poor households. Thus poverty must be addressed, as well as the other active exclusionary factors, via 'joined-up' policies.

Who is excluded? A conservative estimate of those excluded would be most of the poor:

- 24% of adults, 30% of children	)
overlapping with:	)
- 75% of disabled	) around
- 46% of single parents	) 14m
- 57% of ethnic minorities	) people?
- 65% of pensioners	)
- many young delinquents	)

There are, obviously, some women, disabled or ethnic minority people who are not poor. Since 1994 Labour's increases in state benefits for families with children have taken perhaps a million out of poverty, but Burgess and Propper showed that in the 1990s 37% of households were poor in at least one of four years and that 34% of these poor moved regularly in and out of poverty. They concluded (2002:61):

> *…a large minority of individuals experience poverty at least once in a number of years. While for many this is a one-off event, many who escape do not move far from poverty, and among those who are poor, there is a group who experience repeated and persistent poverty. In other words poverty experiences are widespread and are not random.*

Barry pointed out that being excluded presumes someone or something is doing the excluding: the something can be structural features of society (like how it views and treats disabled people or ethnic minorities) or someone (for instance, the attitudes of gatekeepers including facility managers who disapprove of young people with little money and a lot of spare time) or even of citizens themselves, like the two out of five people with a non-sporting view of their bodies - SC/HEA/DoH, 1992). Barry (2002:17) suggested that in the UK:

> *…a society marked by a combination of a market economy and liberal democratic institutions is liable to have two thresholds of social exclusion. The lower one divides those who habitually participate in the mainstream institutions from those who are outside them. The upper threshold is the one that divides those in the middle from those who can detach themselves from the mainstream institutions.*

The latter are wealthy people who can afford private health care, who can buy into elitist housing estates with gates and security systems, and indeed those who can buy top grade services and privacy in private clubs for fitness and sport. For reasons of space I will not consider them further here, focussing on those below the second threshold. If in the modern world, access to sport, physical activity and culture are part of the citizen's package of expectations, or even, by some people's values, of citizen's rights, then this is a social policy issue for the state both centrally and locally. Barriers to participation are multiple, as shown in Table 1.

Structural	Mediating	Personal
Poor physical/social environment	Managers' policies/attitudes	Lack of time structure
Poor facilities/community capacity	Labelling by society	Lack of income
Poor support networks/communal social capital		Lack of skills/personal social capital
Poor transport		Fears over safety Poor body image

Table 1: Barriers to participation Source: Collins 2003, Table 3.1

Thus. Partnerships of agencies are needed to make any sort of substantial breakthrough; even if benefit policies provide more resources for poor people, lack of information, accessible sites or programmes, poor transport, and unhelpful staff can prevent even interested people from taking part. I hope this section has shown that: when one barrier is dealt with others come into effect, so 'single-silo' policies undertaken in isolation release only small numbers of people from poverty and exclusion. Moreover the many and complex factors mean that area-based policies are relevant often to only a minority of citizens; many policies have to be delivered to households or even to individuals. New policy packages require professionals in sports planning and management to work more closely with their counterparts in planning, health, justice services and education, but there has been a systematic neglect of poverty and welfare and transport services, except for discounts and leisure cards mentioned below.

Lack of Research

Currently there is a strong movement amongst policy makers for evidence-based research, but the newness of inclusion policies and the small and scattered research budgets for sport and leisure mean that there has been relatively little research of substantial scale and quality. Its characteristics are:

- Much small-scale, case study, often qualitative and depending on personal recall or opinion (like self-reported health status) (Coalter, 2001, Coalter et al, 2000; Collins, 2003)

- Little baseline data from which to follow up (just beginning in Sportengland's school children's surveys1994 and 1999 and Sports Council for Wales primary and secondary school curriculum surveys)

- Situations in which it is difficult/impossible to select and contact control groups; thus Nichols and Taylor (1996) managed to identify a modest control group against which to assess sports counselling interventions with young offenders in West Yorkshire but nothing has been done on the scale of Segrave and Hastad's 1985 study, evening the USA. Indeed when public agencies declare openly policies to serve everyone, it might be said to be unethical to select people for no programmes or placebos.

- Most studies show a strong class gradient despite some eminent sociologists like Ken Roberts, averring that class is declining if not dead as a factor, but measurement of class is not an accurate surrogate for income, which is often not included or asked very simply (without definition like before and after housing costs) for fear of reducing response rates. Thus, except for some proprietorial research by sports goods companies, not much is known about sport as an area of consumption activity compared, say, to tourism

- Although a second survey on volunteering has been done (Sport England, 2004) with some additional detail, not much is known about voluntary sport as an area generating social capital, beyond aggregate data on membership (Attwood et al, 2003, Warde et al, 2003), despite these nor do we know if this varies between rich and poor areas. This is one of the issues which will be debated between people from government, professional bodies and academics in a series of 3 seminars funded by the ESRC, organised by the author, Jonathan Long and Fred Coalter in 2003-4.

Collins (2003A) examines in great detail the effects on exclusion of age, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and location; here I look at just 2 – lack of income and transport.

Combating Poverty

The main anti-poverty and inclusion policy of the Blair government and the European Commission is to provide income through helping people to get paid jobs. But of the 14m in British society listed above this is not a realistic aim nor a realistic policy for a substantial number –notably some of the old and those close to retirement with skills that are now redundant, those with chronic, limiting or disabling conditions and severe learning difficulties, some single parents, and low income workers/families just around the poverty threshold. For all these disposable income is too small to provide a decent level of social, sporting and cultural involvement.

Discounts or subsidies for sports and cultural provision, therefore, is a necessary if not sufficient condition as an incentive to take part. This was on an ad hoc basis but from the late 1980s became more organised through Passports to Leisure/Leisure Cards. Most have made minimal penetration and operate with much bureaucracy for small numbers, yet generally have escaped Audit Commission criticism. They exhibit (Collins 2003A,B; Collins and Kennett, 1998,1999):

- No or tiny dedicated budgets and staff

- Poor marketing mainly through passive, low-response means (like leaflets, posters) rather than active outreach

- Small discounts, too small to attract low income users, often shrunk since their institution by pressures from politicians and top managers to improve the bottom line, even when this is in direct opposition to published social inclusion policies, and a

- Limited range of activities, often confined to sport and of interest to only a small minority of women, older people and ethnic minorities, when it is clear that good take up is associated with offering not only public arts services but also a wide range of commercial retail, professional services and leisure appealing to the two in five who are 'non-sporty'

Table 2: Take up of Leisure Cards in English and Welsh local authorities

Type of Authorities	**With commercial services**	*(n=)*	**Without commercial services**	*(n=)*
London	21,594	(8)*	8,646	(14)
Metropolitan Districts	14,138	(10)	10,773	(12)
Unitary Authorities	16,029	(13)*	14,234	(16)*
Non Metropolitan English Districts	5,975	(17)	8,320	(52)
Unitaries in Wales	-		5,454	(6)
Total	432,042	(48)	841,459	(100)

* NOTE: each skewed by one 'front runner' with over 100,000 card holders Source CIPFA (2003)

Thus where data is available, take up averages 10, 700 or only 5% of the population, or at best one in six of the poor population**.** The average in 2002 was 9,400 for sport-only cards, but 13,600, 45% more, for those with commercial services (Table 2). There are exceptions: Nottingham City has signed up 106,300, Windsor and Maidenhead 108,000 and Greenwich 102,000 citizens; however, having a card and using it are two different things, as many cyclists will admit about their machines languishing in garages and sheds. The lessons are clear: if sport is to fulfil its potential as a social marketing tool (Andreason, 1995; Kotler et al, 2002) it must be part of a corporate inclusion policy, with attractive services and prices, adequately resourced and marketed and backed by modern IT and promotion.

Transport and exclusion from sport

It seems commonsense if not self-evident that however helpful policies for provision of sports facilities and services, if transport services are poor or non-existent, only those with private vehicles can have access; people like Mayer Hillman have spelled out the effects of declining public transport and road safety for 30 years (e.g., Hillman, Adams and Whitelegg, 1990), but Sport England policies have alluded lightly to the issue and not encouraged close involvement with public and private operators of buses in particular, leaving the issue to town and transport planners, many of whom are stuck in the 'car culture' (Linadio, 1996). Rural workers, while often poorly pain need a car and spend more of their disposable incomer than their more fortunate neighbours to get access to work, school and essential services, and, even more so, sport and leisure venues (Rural Media Company, 2000). New studies confirm this differential (Health Education Authority, 1998; Social Exclusion Unit, 2003; Hine and Mitchell, 2003).

The features of public transport are

- costly and infrequent services
- small flows/take up especially in the off peak and for leisure purposes
- only a few schedules services adapted for tourism and recreation, e.g., in Kirklees
- services needing subsidy, especially summer-only services for recreation
- (Countryside Agency, 2000)

Transport gets only occasional mentions in Slee, Curry, and Joseph's (2002) case studies of schemes to combat exclusion. While there are national policies to promote walking and cycling, including the unexpected success of the National Cycleway Network (Collins, 2003b), the car is wholly suited for countryside recreation, and sport's needs for carrying equipment and clothing. Any diversion is hard won and difficult to sustain.

Sport for social good

Sport England and DCMS have produced in recent years many documents averring the power of sport 'for good', as Sports Minister Richard Caborn pithily put it. Support has come from the Local Government Association and professional bodies. These claims are made for:

- helping to sustain and enhance the natural and built environment
- increasing the safety from crime and cohesion of neighbourhoods and communities
- improving people's health and well being
- regenerating areas through activity and jobs, and
- encouraging lifelong learning.

Because of the newness of policies, the paucity and limitations of research, and the complexity of many partnership schemes, much depends on professional judgement and opinion (CCPR, 2002B). Evidence is still mainly anecdotal rather than measured (Long et al, 2002) and as yet there are no experts on what works. *Game Plan* looks for an increase to Finnish levels of 70% in moderate activity five times a week for 30 minute, in less than two decades. But it ignores the facts that:

- the Finns had stronger policies, greater expenditure and a longer period to attain these levels

- the necessary proportionate increases in facilities and person power are neither proposed let alone mandated and financed.

- The effective mix and personal 'doses' of conventional sport and physical activity have not been established; the necessary scale of mass promotion - that is by sustained TV campaigns – have been neglected by the Scottish and Welsh Assemblies, but something has been hinted at for England in the press. While we know that exercise is cheaper than surgery or drugs, we cannot yet say with certainty, as the CCPR (2002A) does that physical activity is *the best buy in public health.* Despite sport comprising a quarter of all volunteering, the mechanisms of building and using social capital (Putnam, 2000, Warde et al 2003) have not been teased out. We suspect but do not know for sure, that these are greater in rich than poor areas. Nor do we know how far active sportspeople become active citizens (Coalter, 2000).Specialist Colleges, including for sport show a modest increase in academic performance (YST, 2003), but it is not clear whether these are transferable to other educational settings. Ephemeral gains in youth crime reduction can be gained from summer SPLASH schemes (Loxley, Curtin and Brown, 2002; SPLASH national Support Team, 2003; Sport England et al, 2002) with police and probation services, but we do not know whether crime is merely diverted to neighbouring places, or whether the gains can be sustained enough to reduce the very high average re-offending rate of 70% after 2 years.

Conclusions

Clearly then, we are at an early phase of this stage of policy development, and it remains to be seen whether New Labour will get another four years' tenure to pursue its policies, or whether there will be another political switchback which would change conditions for monitoring and evaluating outcomes. So while we have to think, research and work hard, we also need to be patient- outcomes of major policies in my experience take 7-10 years to appear. Meantime, we must act on best evidence, most strongly tested beliefs. As a researcher, my priorities would be to establish:

- who holds 'sporty' or 'non-sporty' attitudes and lifestyles and the consequences
- the realities and mechanisms of social capital in rich and poor areas
- actual health gains from sport and exercise for different groups
- the contribution of sport in reducing offending behaviour, and
- any links between sport and above average academic performance.

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Early experience, sports of the future and health

Sport and early learning experiences

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Introduction

This paper reviews evidence that suggests early learning experiences are crucial to continuing involvement in sport, but that currently only particular sections of the population are in a position to access quality experiences in schools and sports clubs. In particular, young people from lower social groups, girls and young disabled people in greater numbers miss out on quality early experiences compared to children from higher social groups, boys and the able-bodied. Evidence is reviewed that suggests primary schools are by themselves unable to deliver quality early experiences, while specialist experiences in secondary schools come too late to impact a majority of children in relation to their competencies, perceptions and motivation. It is also suggested that specialist secondary school programmes in their traditional form have had limited impact in terms of transferring knowledge learned in school to adult life. A framework for thinking about youth sport experiences developed by Canadian Jean Côté and his colleagues is applied to the evidence presented here. It is proposed that Côté's developmental model of sport socialisation supports interventions that involve quality early experiences for all children in the 5-14 age range through the integration of community and school resources, the establishment of multi-sports clubs in school sites, and the deployment of specialist teachers of physical education to work with the KS2 and KS3 age groups.

The importance of early learning experience to lifelong participation

Studies of expertise in a range of activities, including the arts, sciences and sport, conclude that individuals who reach the top of their respective fields typically move through the same three phases, characterised by Bloom (1985) as the early years, the middle years and the later years. This work formed the basis of the claim by Ericsson and colleagues (1993), now taken up widely within the sport literature (eg. Balyi, 2001), that the achievement of expertise takes at least ten years of specialised training. Within this process, Kalinowski (1985) has argued that what is done in the early years has the greatest impact on the achievement of expertise since without this foundational phase there will be no middle or later period.

The work of Bloom et al (1985) has been further developed and applied specifically to sport by Côté and his colleagues. Côté & Hay (2002) undertook an extensive review of the research literature and, from a developmental perspective, suggested that young people's socialisation into sport follows a general pattern. Early experiences in organised sport they call the sampling years, usually for children in the 7-12 age group, though precise ages can vary according to sport. The key features of the sampling phase are that young people participate in a range of sports, that their main motivation is fun and enjoyment, and that the emphasis is on playing rather than training. A characteristic of this phase is what they call 'deliberate play', which involves young people in structured activities that require the development of particular techniques and tactical understanding. Young people may continue in this sampling phase for as long as opportunities are available to them, or else they may either drop out of sport or move into a second phase, which Côté & Hay call the specialising phase.

In this second specialising phase beginning at around ages of 13-15 in most sports, the range of sports reduces, perhaps to three or two, and motivation begins to shift from fun and enjoyment in itself to competitive success and enjoyment of winning. Typically in the specialising phase there is a shift in emphasis from deliberate play to deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is focussed on improving current levels of performance and is evident in an increase in the frequency and intensity of training.

From the specialising phase Côté & Hay suggest young people have three options. The first is to drop out of sport, the second is to enter what they call the recreational phase where sport is played relatively informally and for fun, and the third is to move to the investment phase. Entry into the investment phase usually signals a focus on one activity and a commitment to intensive training and competitive success. In this phase, deliberate practice dominates and there remains very little deliberate play.

Côté, Baker & Abernethy (in press) place particular emphasis on the importance of deliberate play as a key characteristic of the early or sampling years. They contrast deliberate play with the free and spontaneous play of infants and the deliberate practice of adult sport. They suggest "deliberate play

activities are designed to maximise inherent enjoyment. (They) are regulated by rules adapted from standardized sport rules and are set up and monitored by the children or by an adult involved in the activity." (p.4) Côté et al argue on the basis of empirical studies of expert team sports players in Canada and Australia that all of these athletes had experienced prolonged and high quality periods of deliberate play during their early years. Moreover, as their term 'the sampling years' suggests, it appears to be important in terms of maintaining motivation and interest among children that the deliberate play experience is across a range of activities. Their studies provide strong evidence against the practice of early specialisation in one sport.

We can conclude that the early years are critical years for the development of the kinds of physical competences that place individuals in a position to access and engage actively in the physical culture of society. Indeed, it might be argued that the beginning of KS3 is too late to be introducing children to deliberate play through specialist teaching and coaching and an appropriately comprehensive and balanced programme of activities. Research, to be reviewed next, suggests that motivation, self-concept and perceptions of competence are already well established by ages 11-14.

The impact of competency and skill development on young people's later involvement in sport

The research on expertise provides strong evidence to suggest that the nature of children's early experiences of sport is crucial to the development of high levels of expertise. We do not know if the same factors apply to individuals who do not reach elite levels of performance since researchers have not conducted studies of this population within the same theoretical framework as the studies of expertise. However, it seems reasonable to suppose that the quality of early experiences will have some impact on the sport careers of all young people, regardless of ability. In this respect, the acquisition of physical competencies may not be the only important factor.

Psychologists have suggested that other important factors are young people's perceptions of their competence in relation to their peers and the effects of these perceptions on their motivation to participate in physical activities. Lee et al (1995) argue that a key dimension of perceptions of competence is children's understanding of the relationship between effort and ability. Prior to age 10, young children tend to equate effort with ability. In other words, they believe that they can accomplish most physical tasks if they try hard, and tend to overestimate what they can do. Between the ages of 8 to 12 (depending on the individual), children begin to recognise that their abilities to accomplish tasks may be limited regardless of the effort they put in. Lee and her colleagues (1995) argue that this maturational cognitive change coincides with young people's entry into organised sport, where normative judgements are made about ability through the comparison of one individual with another. Young people very quickly learn where they fit in the hierarchies of ability of classmates and friendship groups in relation to specific activities such as a sport.

A study by the IYS (1999) identified various motivational and activity groupings within a cohort of 2510 11-14 year old boys and girls from 50 secondary schools across England using a variety of validated psychometric questionnaires and a self-report activity questionnaire. Within this study, Biddle and colleagues identified five groups of young people with the following characteristics:

Group A: 13% of sample
These young people scored high on all motivational variables. They are probably the 'serious' sports players. Other features were:
- They are the most physically active;
- They have the highest physical self-worth
- The group has more boys (66.8%) than girls (33.2%) but is spread evenly across the age group.

Group B: 31% of sample
Young people in this group recorded positive motivational responses, such as defining success through self-improvement, having incremental beliefs in sport ability (i.e., they believe that sport ability can improve), having high perceived competence, and being intrinsically motivated. Other features were:
- They are quite physically active;
- They have high physical self-worth (i.e. feel good about themselves physically);
- The group has equal numbers of boys and girls across the age group.

Group C: 26% of sample
This group is motivated mainly through external motivation. They scored high on ego orientation in terms of defining success through winning rather than self-improvement, and held strong beliefs that sport ability is fixed rather than changeable. This profile is likely to be fragile in the long term. Other features were:

- They are moderately active
- They have about average physical self-worth
- The group has equal numbers of boys and girls spread across the age group.

Group D: 16% of sample
These pupils are not particularly motivated for physical education and sport and have low scores on most variables. Other features were:

- They scored fairly low in physical activity
- They scored fairly low in physical self-worth
- The group has more girls (67.5%) than boys (32.5%) but is spread evenly across the age group.

Group E: 14% of sample
These pupils scored low in both task and ego orientation, believe sport ability is fixed, have low perceived competence, and take part in physical education and sport for external reasons, because they 'have to' rather than they 'want to'. They are high in amotivation, which involves feelings of helplessness. Other features were:

- They are not physically active
- They have low physical self-worth
- The group has more girls (67%) than boys (33%) and they are predominantly from the older end of the age group.

Biddle and his colleagues (IYS, 1999) propose that the motivational profiles in Groups A and B are the most robust in terms of predicting continuing participation in physical activity. These groups account for 44% of the sample and contain slightly more boys than girls. The profiles of Groups C, D and E, although different, predict low or no continuing participation. These groups contain 56% of the sample, more girls than boys, and more, older children.

These data suggest that between the ages of 11 to 14, that is, between the beginning and end of KS3, young people's motivational profiles, including self-perceptions of competence and physical self-concept, and their dispositions towards active participation in sport, are well on their way to being formed. Longitudinal research with a similar cohort and methods would confirm whether profiles constructed at this stage (ages 11-14) can predict continuing participation and levels of participation. Additional research investigating the nature of the young people's prior experiences of sport would also confirm the place and importance of deliberate play for all young people as a possible explanation for these motivational profiles.

The influence of social background and gender on early learning experiences

There can be no question that social background, gender and disability each have a strong influence on the nature of children's early experiences of sport.

Recent studies of physical education and sport, both within the formal curriculum (Penney, 2002; Wright, 1996) and during less formal playground activity (Renold, 1997), provide compelling evidence to suggest that many girls are underserved by existing provision. Meanwhile, traditional sport-based programmes have been accused of promoting a form of masculinity that reproduces the dominant gender order (Hargreaves, 1994). Flintoff and Scraton (2001) propose that while recent studies confirm the findings of earlier feminist research conducted in the 1980s, there appears to have been little progress towards resolving these issues. Supporting this argument, Williams and Bedward noted that in Britain:

> The disadvantaged position of girls would seem to have little to do with the recent implementation of policy and more to do with the remarkable resilience to change that physical education has demonstrated, particularly over the last 15 years. The failure to abandon a traditional gender differentiated approach has resulted in physical education being unique among subjects within British secondary education. (Williams and Bedward, 1999, p.7)

This apparent resistance to change has not been due to a lack of initiatives to provide more attractive forms of physical education for girls (eg. Sport England, 2002; Youth Sport Trust/Nike, 2001;

Australian Sports Commission/Heart Foundation, 1993). Nor is it due to a shortage of explanations for girls' unsatisfactory experiences, ranging from inappropriate clothing and facilities (Flintoff and Scratton, 2001), individual girls' alleged lack of motivation and self-esteem (Graydon, 1997; Lee et al, 1999), lack of equity and opportunity (Evans, 1989), and the effects of patriarchal oppression (Nilges, 1998). Hargreaves (1994) has shown that gender differentiation in the provision of physical education and sport has deep historical roots. Williams and Bedward (2001) suggest there is a cultural and generational gap between teachers and their pupils, resulting in teachers' lack awareness of girls' interests. Looking beyond school programmes, Deem and Gilroy (1998) and Kay (1995) point to traditional family structures that disqualify physical activities such as sport as legitimate pursuits for women. It is unlikely that a publicity campaign targeting girls as proposed by the authors of Game Plan (Strategy Unit, 2002, part 4.44) will resolve the obdurate and deeply sedimented underlying issues relating to sport as a site for the production and reproduction of masculinities and femininities.

There is also strong evidence to show that the scope and quality of early experiences of sport is determined by children's social backgrounds, particularly in terms of social class and ethnicity. Much of the social background data relates to adult participation. However, recent studies by Kirk et al (1997) in Australia and Kay (2000) in England show that children's participation in community-based sport is determined to a significant degree by the family's socio-economic status and composition. Children from white middle class populations are over represented in club sport. This is in part due to cultural traditions and associations, and in part to the fact that participation requires adequate disposable income to pay for fees, kit and equipment, and transport to training and competition venues. The division of labour within families to support participation, particularly where more than one child is involved, is also significant, and tends to favour families where parents have a degree of flexibility in their work hours. Few children in the Kirk et al and Kay studies made it to representative sport levels without considerable assistance from their families.

Both studies also insert a cautionary note about homogenising sport in relation to social background. They show clearly that some sports are more accessible to children from some ethnic populations and lower social groups because of tradition and culture, and because they are available locally, thus reducing transport costs and logistics, and they are relatively affordable in terms of fees and equipment. Other sports are accessible to only a small proportion of children, mostly from the AB social groups, again because of tradition and culture, and also because they are relatively expensive.

Both studies show that the family is a primary unit of support for children's early experiences in sport, particularly in the community context. Kay's (2000) research has also provided some sign-posts for likely future trends in relation to the family. She argues that the family is a dynamic and changing social institution and a primary institution of children's socialisation. She notes a number of key socio-demographic changes to this institution in Britain. First, there has been an increase in the proportion of dual-earner families over the past twenty years. But there has also been a divergence in the financial situations of families. In 1998, 17% of households with dependent children were no-earner households. These trends suggest an increasing divide between rich and poor. Second, there has been a divergence in family formation. Women from social groups DE marry younger, are more likely to have children born outside of marriage, and divorce earlier than their wealthier counter-parts. Third, single-parent households are the fastest growing family type, with Britain recording the highest numbers in Europe in 1995. Moreover, just under half of these households are workless. Taken together with what we know about the primary role families play in supporting children during the early years of their sport experiences, we can predict considerable challenges to increasing participation amongst social groups that are already under-represented in sport.

Studies by Fitzgerald et al (in press), Sport England (2001) and Barton (1993) among others suggest that young disabled people have been seriously disadvantaged in terms of their experiences of sport due to the persistent influence of 'ableist' and normative assumptions about sport and disability. Fitzgerald et al (in press) argue that these assumptions have persisted in the face of a growing number of policy mandates that seek to promote inclusion and equity. She and her colleagues suggest that the limited impact of these mandates is due to the relative paucity of research that has sought to investigate the actual experiences of physical activity from the point of view of young disabled people and their families.

The ineffectiveness of school physical education in promoting early skill development and positive attitudes towards sport

Most children's first experience of specialist teaching and a wide range of physical activities is when they move to secondary school around the ages of 11 to 13. Most of the research on physical education has, as a result, tended to concentrate on secondary school physical education programmes. Numerous studies (eg. Green, 2002; Curtner-Smith, 1999; Penney & Evans, 1999) show consistently that despite a decade of the NCPE, schools continue to practice physical education in a multi-activity, sport-based form that first appeared in government schools in the 1950s (Kirk, 1992). This form of physical education is characterised by relatively short units of activity, sometimes as short as four or six lessons, an overwhelming focus on technique development, a lack of accountability for learning and little progression of learning, and the almost exclusive use of a directive teaching style. Evidence from these studies and from studies of girls in particular suggests that this traditional form of physical education is not meeting the needs of many young people entering KS3.

The adult participation data since the 1970s tells a consistent story, which is that only tiny numbers of adults participate in activities they experienced as part of secondary school physical education. Even if we include exercise activities such as jogging, cycling, swimming, aerobics, weight training and so on, the introduction of HRE since the early 1980s seems to have had only a small impact on adult activity. There appears to be a *prima facia* case to argue that there has been very little transfer of learning from school physical education to adult life (Fairclough et al, 2002; Kirk, 2002). Data summarised in Game Plan (Strategy Unit, 2002, part 4.23) supports this point. If an individual's perception of their physical competence is a key determinant of their willingness to participate in physical activity, then we might conclude that secondary school physical education has until now been relatively ineffective in promoting skill development and positive attitudes.

As I have already argued, there is strong evidence to suggest that by the beginning of KS3 it is already too late to begin to provide young people with the kinds of deliberate play experience across a range of activities advocated by Côté and his colleagues, among others. Indeed, this point is hardly new. As long ago as the 1930s, L.P.Jacks described the 5 to 12 age range as the 'skill hungry years', and the point is re-iterated by the authors of Game Plan (Strategy Unit, 2002, part 4.18). Since at least the 1930s and on a regular basis, some physical educators have argued for the importance of specialist teachers in primary schools. This advocacy has lead to the trial of schemes such as a project in Scotland to use secondary specialist teachers in feeder primary schools in the 1980s (Pollatschek, 1982). More recently in England, specialist curriculum materials such as the TOPS programme have been developed for primary schools. Evaluation projects suggest that this programme is popular with teachers. But we continue to lack valid and reliable research data on the impact of this programme on children's learning in primary schools. It is also too early to say whether the School Sports Coordinators and Primary Link Teachers will be able to redress this problem of lack of quality teaching in KS1 and KS2.

The general quality of primary school physical education is unknown to us due to a relative paucity of research studies in this area. The research that has been undertaken suggests that there is huge variation in the quality of children's experiences, both across schools and within schools (Bailey and MacFadyen, 2000). It has long been recognised that primary school teachers are generally poorly prepared by their teacher education programmes to teach physical education. Further to this, the intensification of work for primary school teachers over the past decade and a half has exacerbated this situation. Despite the presence of the NCPE, there is evidence to suggest that most schools struggle to meet statutory requirements for physical education.

It is also significant to note that the most recent support materials for schools such as the TOPS programme do not appear to have been informed by new research-based developments in physical education teaching, assessment and curriculum, such as model-based teaching and learning (eg. Metzler, 2000; Launder, 2001; Wein, 2001). The possibility that such programmes might bring about reform in primary school physical education is made even more problematic by adherence to a traditional form of out-of-school, short course, inservice training. Armour and Yelling (2003) have shown that this approach has serious limitations in terms of improving teachers' practice, and they present a strong case for the development of forms of professional development that are school-based and continuous.

Ironically, anecdotal evidence suggests that the largest area of growth in sport participation over the past decade has been in the 6-11 age range as governing bodies of sport have developed modified forms of their sports for younger children. The implications of this development are far-reaching.

Firstly, children who are able to participate in a number of community based club sports are likely to have a more enriched experience of sport compared with their age peers whose main experience is in school physical education, thus making the primary school teacher's task even more difficult since the range of ability and experience levels may be widening. Secondly, volunteer coaches in clubs are increasingly being faced with larger, mixed ability groups of children who have varying degrees of interest in and motivation towards a particular sport. This development suggests that there will be increasingly serious challenges for volunteer coaches to develop skills that allow them to facilitate quality deliberate play experiences for children. Third, in light of what we know about the importance of social background for community-based participation, the downward diffusion of organised sport experiences for younger and younger children is likely to mean that children from social groups DE, girls, disabled children, and children from particular ethnic groups are going to be further disadvantaged.

Interventions in the early years to reduce later drop out and disaffection

Despite the gaps in our knowledge highlighted here, there appears to be sufficient evidence to suggest that renewed attention is required to the nature of children's experiences between the ages of 5-14 if participation in sport is to be improved among specific population groups. A number of points can be highlighted in relation to strategic interventions to address the issues raised in this paper.

A key issue to consider in relation to interventions to improve sustained participation in physical activity is the role of schools and school physical education. It seems clear from the available evidence that the beginning of KS3 is too late to begin to provide young people with the kinds of quality, deliberate play experiences they require in their early years of sport participation. The socio-demographic data shows that for under-represented population groups in particular, school remains the most likely place that they will gain access to a quality physical education experience. The key problem, however, is that with the increasing pressures on the primary school curriculum and on generalist teachers, it seems highly unlikely that primary schools can offer the kind of quality experience young people need in the 5-11 age range that can significantly influence their continuing participation.

These tensions inherent in the role schools can play in the early physical education of children suggests that we need some fresh thinking on how resources might best be marshalled. I propose that the framework developed by Côté and his colleagues' provides a fresh way of thinking about children's early experiences of physical activity.

Côté's work suggests it is important that young people experience a sampling phase during their sport careers. This means that during the early years it is desirable for young people to be encountering a range of physical activities and literally sampling what is available to them. The major motivation for these 'Samplers', according to Côté & Hay, is fun and enjoyment rather than competitive success by itself. The emphasis Côté & Hay place on what they call deliberate play should also inform our thinking about the early years. Deliberate play suggests that Samplers should 'play the game' more than they practice drills and skills, since this links with their principle interests in fun. Lee et al. (1995) support this point, suggesting that the focus in the early years should be predominately on what psychologists call a 'task' climate (where success depends on doing the best you can) rather than an 'ego' climate (where success depends on being better than others). They claim teachers, coaches and parents can play a key role in creating a task climate in sport. Indeed some of the modified sports such as the Australian Kanga Cricket have embedded a task climate in the structure of the game, so that all players regardless of ability get to bowl, bat, wicket keep and field the same amount of time.

The importance of a task climate for deliberate play experiences is supported by research and development carried out by a host of researchers and teachers on Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU) developed by Bunker & Thorpe (1982) from the early 1980s. TGfU stresses that young people in the 8-14 age range should learn to play through modified games rather than the more traditional approach of learning skills prior to playing the game. The most recent developments of this work have retained this emphasis, for instance in Metzler's (2000) notion of model-based instruction, Wien's (2001) 'Developing Youth Soccer Players', Launder's (2001) 'Play Practice' approach, and Siedentop's (1994) 'Sport Education' model. The point to note is that young people's improvement as players or performers requires them to have as many opportunities as possible to participate in their chosen sport or sports in ways that are authentic and interesting.

Furthermore, there is strong evidence to show why competitive success as a primary aim should not be emphasised during the sampling phase. During adolescence, young people grow at different rates.

When cut off dates for age groupings are considered, it is possible for one child with a birthdate at the beginning of the competitive season to be up to a year older chronologically than a child with a birth date at the end of the season (Wilson, 1999). Different maturational rates of children with the same chronological age potentially compounds this problem, so that an early maturer with a birthdate at the beginning of the season could be considerably more mature physically than a late maturer with a birth date later in the season. Clearly, the early maturing individual has a distinct competitive advantage in many sports in terms of being physically larger, stronger, and having a more mature neuro-physiology, which is an advantage in learning sport skills.

The birth-date effect and maturational age have a profound influence on the possibility of continuing participation in sport for many children during the critical 11-16 age range when it is alleged drop out rates rise steeply. It is during this early to mid adolescence period that the most dramatic maturational differences appear between age peers. It is also during this period that it becomes increasingly difficult for young people to gain a regular place in a sports team if they lack competence, experience and physical maturity. Siedentop (2002) cites research from the USA that shows young people would rather participate in a losing team than sit on the substitute's bench of a winning team. Anecdotal evidence suggests that as young people progress through early to mid adolescence, there are fewer and fewer opportunities to play sport for all but the most able and mature. This is because at around 13 or 14, as young people enter Côté's specialising phase, competitive success because a more important motivator for participation, both for players and possibly for parents and coaches. Young people may well indeed be walking away from sport during this period of adolescence, but when we consider they may be playing against age peers who are a year or two more mature, and that they may have limited opportunities to play or even be selected to play, it is easier to understand why the drop rate increases.

The notion that young people should be encouraged to sample among a range of appropriately modified physical activities suggests that the current organisation of club sport may present a barrier to sampling. Perhaps the multi-sports club already common in Germany, Belgium and other continental European countries, presents itself as a means of facilitating young people's sampling behaviour. Local multi-sports clubs may be more cost-effective, thereby reducing expense to participants and their families. They may also be able to make more effective use of resources and facilities by sharing these within the same administrative structure. And they may reduce the problem of sports competing with each other for the same pool of young people. The literature cited here on the importance of a quality experience of physical activity in the early years would appear to provide strong support for the notion of the local junior multi-sports club. Arguments presented in Game Plan concerning the promotion of talent identification and development would appear to lend support to such a proposal also (Strategy Unit, 2002, part 5.34).

How might schools contribute within a local multi-sports club context? There are at least two key challenges here that in my view must be addressed if progress is to be made in the early years. The first challenge is the possibility that schools, primary or secondary, may provide a site for the location of local multi-sports clubs. Facility sharing with community groups is not a new idea (see Strategy Unit, 2002, parts 4.33 & 4.34), and there already exists experience within schools concerning how these arrangements can work best. The second challenge is the redeployment of some specialist teachers of physical education to work with children from the beginning of KS2, around the age of 7 or 8 years of age, an option that appears not to have been considered by the authors of Game Plan (eg. Strategy Unit, 2002, part 4.3). This proposal is made on the basis of the points, already established, that KS3 is too late for children to begin to experience specialist teaching and coaching, generalist teachers are ill-prepared to provide the quality of instruction required, and volunteer coaches in community clubs are similarly challenged when faced with coaching large, mixed ability groups of children. It may be that generalist teachers and volunteer coaches could be assisted with the development of their teaching and coaching skills if they were members of local teams assisted by specialist teachers. The integration of community and schools based resources appears to me to be the best chance for a fresh approach to providing quality physical activity experiences in the early years. I conclude with the observation that these proposals are generally consistent with the arguments outlined in Game Plan concerning young people and sport (eg. Strategy Unit, 2002, parts 4.18-4.28), though the proposals in Game Plan perhaps require further specificity and detail.

Summary

The key points of this paper are as follows:

- Quality early learning experiences are of crucial importance to continuing participation in physical activities for elite performers and, we might infer, for the majority of young people also;

- According to Côté and his colleagues, the early years should involve a sampling phase during which young people are exposed to a range of activities in which they participate through deliberate play;

- Quality early learning experiences not only develop physical competencies but, crucially, develop perceptions of competence that underlie the motivation that is vital to continuing participation, and that between the ages of 11-14 (KS3) these perceptions are well established;

- Social class, gender and disability are key barriers to the development of the physical competences, perceptions and motivation that permit young people to participate in physical activities, and children from lower social groups, girls and young disabled people are markedly under-represented in community-based sports clubs;

- Access to a range of activities and specialist teaching at the beginning of KS3 for most children comes too late to impact their competencies, perceptions and motivation, and in any case there is evidence to suggest that the content and forms of delivery of current primary and secondary school programmes is ineffective in transferring knowledge useful in adult life;

- It is concluded that resources need to be concentrated in the KS2 age range if we hope realistically to improve participation levels. The notion of a sampling phase involving deliberate practice supports the notion of interventions centred on the multi-sports club and modified physical activities that foster a task climate, based in school sites, and involving specialist teachers of physical education working with primary school generalist teachers and volunteer coaches.

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Future sports or future challenges to sport?

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Introduction

Predicting the future, especially of the multiplicity of sports, is a notoriously task. For example, in 1979 Veal (1979), predicted that by 1991 participation in badminton and squash would increase by 59 per cent. In fact badminton remained static at 3 per cent and squash declined from 3 per cent to 1 per cent. In 1970 Wilmott and Young ((1973) predicted that, by 2001, participation in table tennis would be 13 per cent (in fact it was 3%) and that swimming would increase to 37 per cent (15%). More significantly, Wilmott and Young, in predicting the growth of mass sports, made no reference to aerobics/keep-fit (which has a participation rate of 12%).

Of course, at the time these authors were writing, there was an absence of robust longitudinal participation data to assist in estimating the direction and pace of future change. However, for a number of reasons, the simple extrapolation of broad survey trends provides limited predictive power. For example, even within current General Household Survey data (not available since 1966), the sub-sample sizes for most individual sports are too small for a precise understanding of trends in individual sports (Cabinet Office, 2002). Further, and more fundamentally, trends in sports participation are affected in complex ways by wider economic, socio-demographic and cultural factors.

The issue of squash and aerobics illustrates a key limitation in predicting future patterns of sports participation – fads and fashions, which also tend to reflect broader cultural factors (we will return to this below). Secondly, it is clear that sports participation is related closely to social class, gender, education and age. Clearly, several aspects of social class – education, cultural and social capital, socialisation, sporting networks, disposable income, health awareness – help to explain different levels and types of sports participation, although they are not determinant and are dynamic. Further, our understanding of these issues is largely correlational and, because of the limited nature of available data, not rooted in any clear understanding of sport's place in participants' lifestyles. For example, there is a clear, if poorly understood, relationship between 'cultural capital' and 'participation'. This is illustrated by Gratton and Tice's (1994) analysis of the GHS, which indicates that those who take part in sport are also more likely to participate in a wide range of socio-cultural activities.

More generally, we lack precise understanding of the role of *sport in lifestyles*, the nature of the efforts/benefits ratio that underpins decisions to continue/discontinue sports participation and the extent to which participants view participation in terms of a social consumption or health investment good. In addition, although there is some indicative evidence that some types of sports participation are supply-led (Roberts et al, 1989; Gratton and Tice, 1994), in general we have a limited understanding of the impact of supply on demand (especially among non-participants). Consequently, in addition to the generic difficulties in predicting the future, predictions in the area of sport are restricted by limited data and a limited understanding of the interaction of factors underpinning the nature and direction of demand.

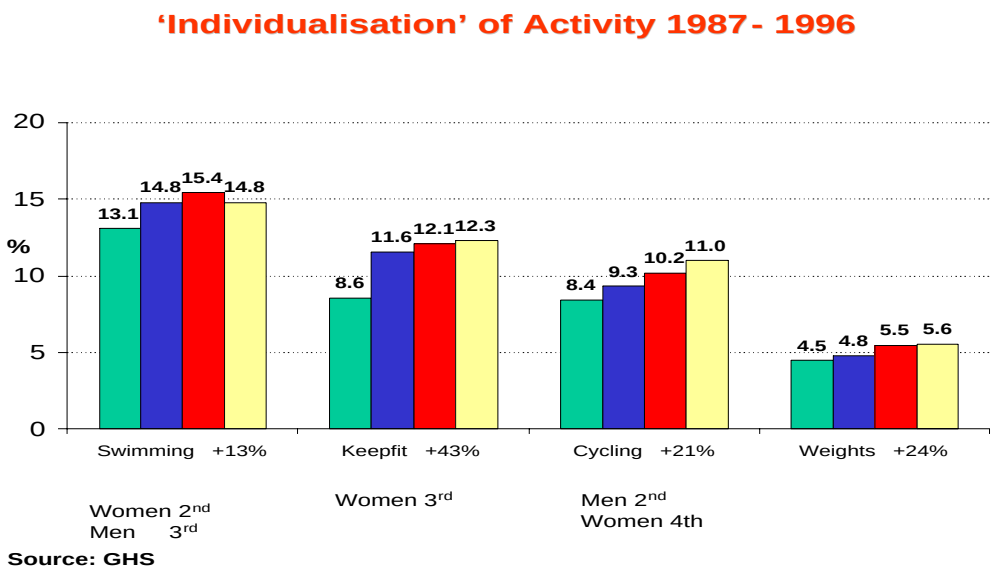
However, within such limits, it is possible to outline certain broad factors that will impact on the volume and nature of sports participation

- Broad socio-cultural changes and associated definitions of sport or the processes of sport.
- The distribution of time.
- An increasingly aging population
- The impact of education
- Early intervention and so-called lifetime activities.

Diversification and 'new sports'

Following relatively continuous increases in participation in the 1980s, participation levelled off in the 1990s (the last GHS data are from 1996). However, this relatively static level of overall participation disguises diversification and changes in the nature of 'sport'. In this context certain sports have experienced substantial increases in participation (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Individualisation of activity



Many of these 'growth sports' share a number of common characteristics.

- Individual and flexible timing. As these activities can be undertaken individually, the timing of participation is flexible.

This partly reflects a response to a growing 'time squeeze' - pressure on time due to increased work time, commuting and leisure choices. For example, a recent survey by the Henley Centre quoted 59 per cent of respondents experiencing "excessive time pressures" and a Department of Trade and Industry survey found that 1 in 6 were working 60 hours or more per week **(**Holliday, 1996). Further, the recent Time Use survey estimated that, on average, commuting accounts for between 3.5-4.5 hours per week.

Such time pressures are also significant for sport in another way. Because sports participants tend to be the most active leisure participants (Gratton and Tice, 1994), they are faced with a combination of greater leisure choices and less leisure time

.

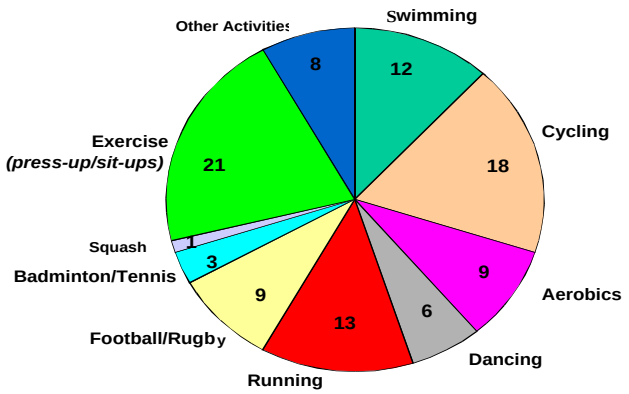
- Non-competitive. Such sports are largely non-competitive and probable characterised by intrinsic motivations and based on task, rather than ego orientation, intrinsically motivated rather than extrinsically driven (we will return to these issues below).
- Relatively low skills levels. Many of these activities are relatively accessible, as they do not require a high level of skill and expertise.
- Fitness, health and appearance. Some of the motivation for increased participation in these sports is based on a wider concern with health and fitness and/or an increased concern with appearance and 'the body'.

It is likely that such motivations will be continue to be important. For example, a Henley Centre survey reported that 25 per cent of respondents wanted to "improve the way I look", with more than one third (37%) wanting to reduce weight. Such motivations should be reinforced by government health/activity promotion campaigns (Cabinet Office 2002).

- Life-style. These activities are among those with the most regular participants. Cycling/keep-fit/weights are the only activities (other than walking) that are done at least twice a week on average. The importance of such activities to any health agenda is illustrated by Figure 2, which is based on the 30 per cent of respondents in the 1998 British Health Survey who met the minimum activity levels required to achieve fitness. Although, overall, sport makes a relatively limited contribution, it is clear that individualistic and flexible activities dominate.

Figure 2 Sports contributing to physical activity

Sports contributing to physical activity (occurrences), 1998, England



More generally, the various factors outlined above could be regarded as a reflection of more fundamental socio-cultural changes. For example, post-modern theorists have pointed to increasing social and cultural fragmentation, with a resultant decline in collective identities and, in an anonymous and rapidly changing world, a growing concern with ‘ the look’ - appearance, body maintenance/physique – which both express identity and permit the exercise of control. Alternatively, Putnam (2000) argues that there has been a decline in social capital, with its elements of community and civic participation, graphically captured in his sports-oriented title, *Bowling Alone*.

Others have suggested that such cultural changes are reflected in the decline in the popularity of participant team sports. Such sports are perceived to be at odds with new social and cultural values, being viewed as compulsory, regimented, hierarchical, authoritarian, gendered and essentially exclusive. The associated argument is that this has been paralleled by increased interest in ‘new sports’, which are inclusive, largely individual, freely chosen, based on task-orientation and intrinsic motivation (Seaton, 1990).

The Young People and Sport in England: 1994-2002 survey (Sport England, 2002) provides some interesting, indicative, support for this analysis. For example, during this period, among sports undertaken *out of lessons* at least 10 times per year, participation in roller-skating/blading/skate-boarding increased by 13 per cent among boys and 8 per cent among girls. Among boys, team games decreased by 4 per cent, although among girls they increased by 5 per cent (despite netball decreasing by 9 per cent).

It is clearly impossible to be precise, but it seems clear that many of the above factors will continue to influence the nature and volume of sports participation – time; changing cultural definition; changing values associated with sport (eg. a shift (**task etc**). Further, in policy terms, as Figure 2 illustrates, attempts to increase health-related participation will further encourage the growth in individual, low-skill and flexible sports/activities such as swimming, walking, cycling and keep-fit/ aerobics. This tendency will be strengthened by the emergence of a new generation of ‘active old’.

Age: a lessening constraint?

Age is another major, and dynamic, factor in influencing the nature, volume and direction of the development of sport. Historically there has been a steep age-related decline in participation in both sport and physical activity and this remains the case (see Figure 3) – a major policy concern, given the increasingly aging nature of the population. However, as Figure 3 also illustrates, there are some indications that, although age remains a strong influence, it is becoming a lessening constraint. For example, between 1987 and 1996 there have been steady increases in participation among those aged 45 and over.

Figure 3 Participation in at least one sport (excluding walking)
(Source: General Household Survey)

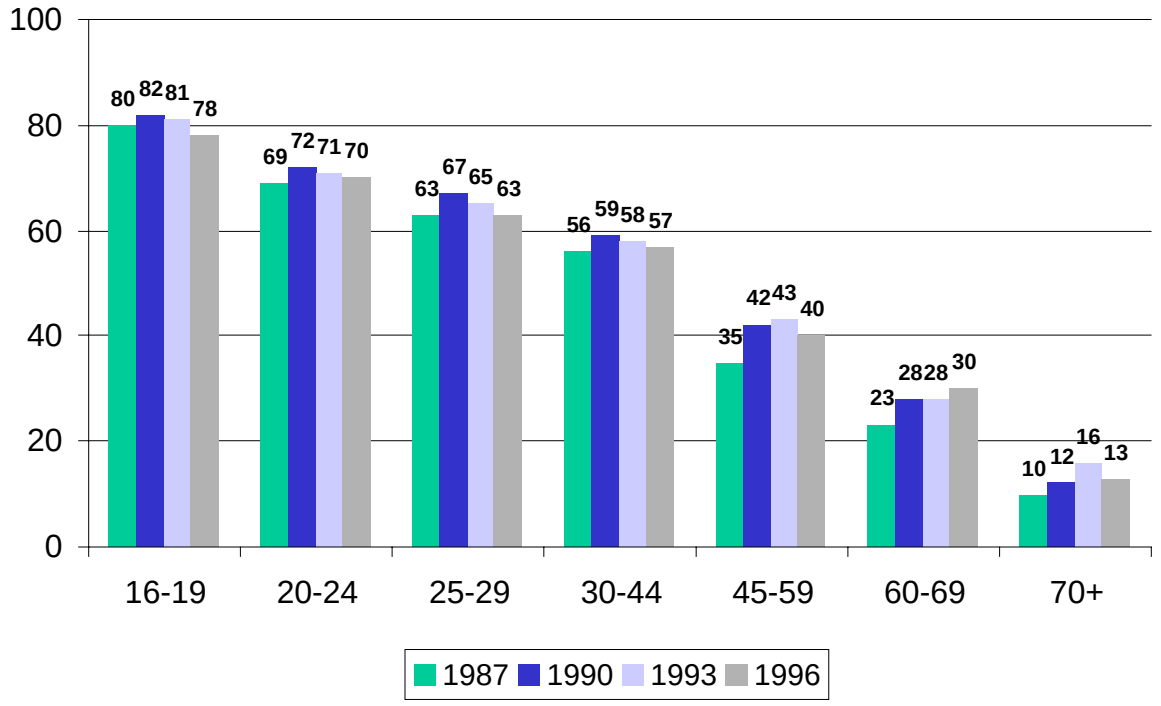
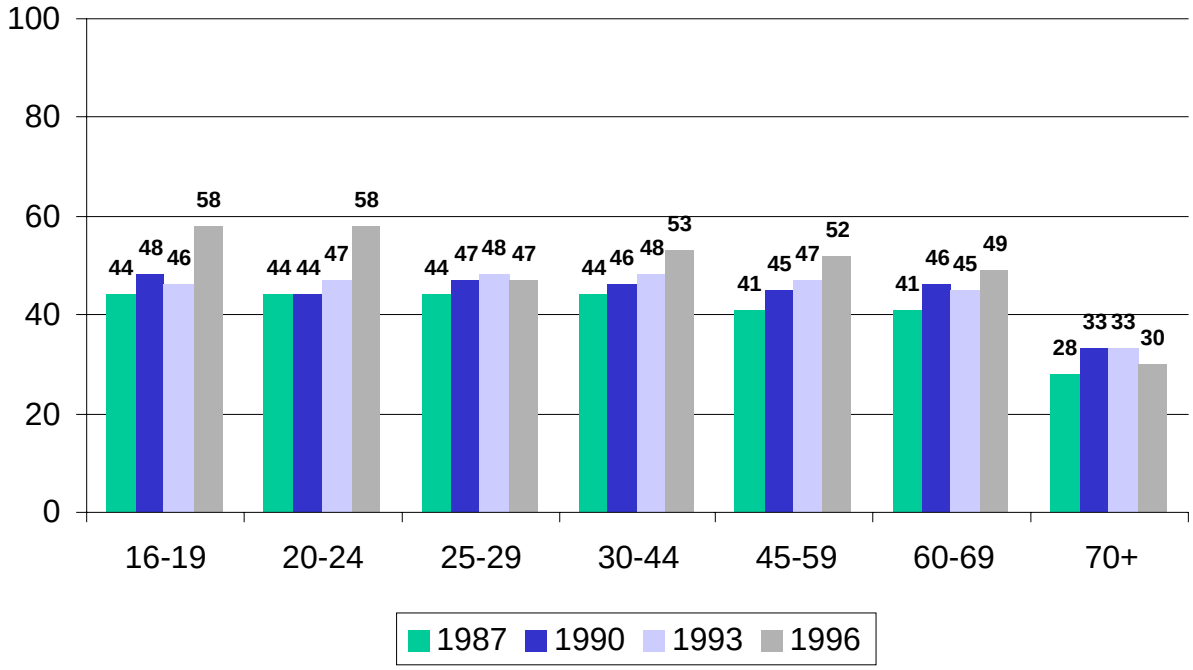


Figure 4 illustrates both that levels of participation in walking have increased among all age categories (except 70 plus) and that the age-related differences are much less than in the more general 'sports' categories.

Figure 4 Participation in walking, 1987 –1996
(Source: General Household Survey)



Although such tendencies need to be interpreted (and extrapolated) with care, there are some indications that a new generation of (more) 'active old' may be emerging – especially if increased fitness/health-oriented targeting is pursued. A range of factors may explain these tendencies:

- Increased ‘sports literacy’
  Generations approaching retirement have a wider sporting experience and higher levels of sports participation than previous generations. Such sports literacy may lead to increased levels of participation among older age groups.

- Earlier retirement/greater affluence
  Larger numbers of ‘younger retired’ mean that already more active people are entering retirement.

- Increased health awareness.
  Increased health awareness has already been acknowledged by commercial providers, with 40 per cent of the membership of Dragon Health Clubs being 45 or over (Mintel, 2003).

The potentially increased demand among the ‘active older’ has important implications for sports policy and provision. Some of these include:

- Low risk, non-contact sports.
  A new generation of older participants are likely to increase demand for low-risk, non-contact sports (including walking).

- Substitutability and variety to encourage continuity
  To encourage and support the new ‘active old’, providers need to consider the nature of substitute sports to enable transitions and continuity of participation.

- More time participating
  This group of early retirees will have the time to participate more frequently than other participant groups.

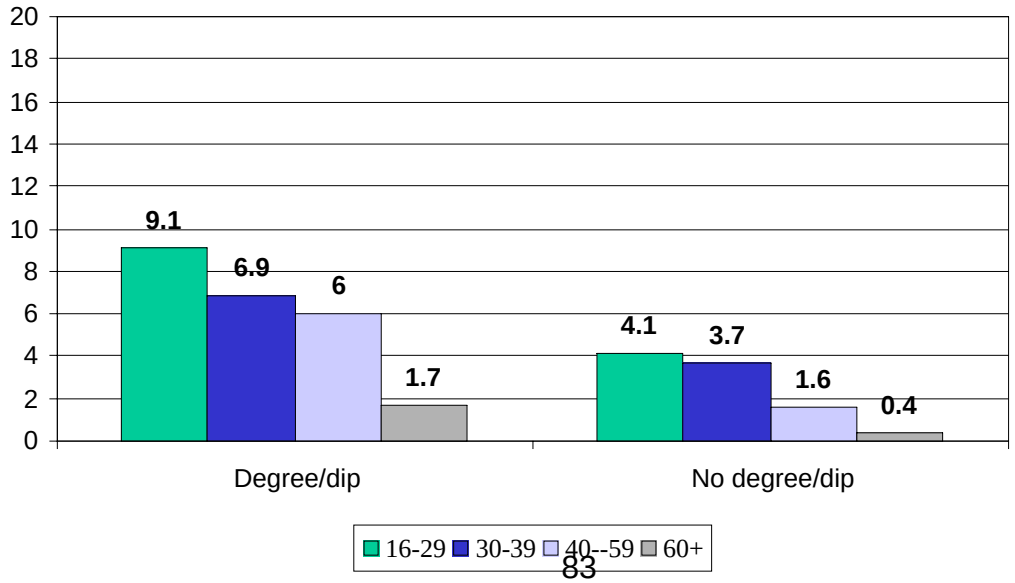
- Senior leagues/veterans
  There is also a possibility of the development of competitions and leagues for these age groups.

Of course, there are possible constraints on such tendencies, such as the current crisis in pension funds and proposed changes to employment legislation to increase retirement age. However, for the reasons outlined, the trend towards a more active older generation is likely to continue,

The impact of education of sports participation

Coalter, Dowers and Baxter (1994) illustrated that those who stayed in education after the minimal school leaving age had higher rates of sports participation than school leavers. As Figure 5 illustrates, not only is there is a clear link between education and sports participation, but also those who have stayed on after the minimum school leaving age are more likely to participate as they grow older.

Figure 5 Educational impacts on age-related participation: badminton
(Source: General Household Survey, 1991)



There are several possible reasons for this close relationship between education and sports participation:

- Many universities provide a wide range of free/cheap/accessible activities.
- Students experience 'delayed adulthood' and the ability to continue to experiment.
- Students are able to establish and defend a post-school active lifestyle. This may be especially important for women.
- Students are able to establish *adult* sporting networks, which may be able to sustain post-education participation.
- The educational experience contributes to the establishment cultural capital (and its associated competences and confidence), which appears to underpin much cultural consumption.

It is worth noting that the increases in and diversification of women's sports participation have paralleled a dramatic increase in their participation in higher education. For example, between 1975 and 1995 there was a 268 per cent in the number of women in higher education (81% for men). With educational policy aiming to achieve a target of 50 per cent of under-30 year olds in further and higher education by 2005 it is likely that this trend in sports participation will continue. Further, many issues relating to the 'Wolfenden Gap' have now shifted to further and higher education – an area which will become increasing important for sport.

Life-long participation and delayed exits?

Major investment is currently being made in school-aged sport, at both primary and secondary levels. Such investment has a dual purpose:

(i) To increase the physical activity levels of children and young people and assist in addressing the concern about growing levels of obesity.
(ii) To establish the platform for 'life-long participation' (or delayed exit).

Such policies are based on work such as Roberts and Brodie (1992) which, via interviewee recall, appears to indicate that early variety in sports participation is linked to adult participation – the more sports young people take part in (especially in their teens) the more likely they are to continue to participate in adulthood. Again, as with the 'active older'; and the 'education impact', such policies should lead to increased levels of sports participation.

However, the evidence for the connection between early participation and adult participation is rather mixed and there are very few rigorous longitudinal tracking studies. For example, a study of Belgian males from aged 13 to 35 found that only 9 per cent of the sample had a stable participation pattern between youth and adulthood and that there were nine different types of 'career models'. However, the best predictor was *inactivity*- ie those who were non-participants in their teens were most likely to be inactive as adults. Interestingly, those with competitive sports profiles had the higher and earlier drop out rates (Vanreusel et al, 1997)..

In a review of existing studies, Shephard and Trudeau (2000) concluded:

> "At best, inter-age correlations have been weak to moderate…the *activities considered have not, in general been chosen for their carry-over potential"*

This raises the issue of so-called 'lifetime activities' – the extent to which young people should be encouraged to take part in the activities which characterise adult participation. Do certain types of activity have higher 'carry-over' value than others? This type of thinking clearly reflects aspects of the previous analysis of the increase in participation in fitness-oriented sports, characterised by task-oriented, intrinsic motivations. Many researchers now argue that, in order to encourage current non-participants (especially young women), there is a need to place greater emphasis on task-orientation, intrinsic-orientation and encourage the development of perceived competence and self-efficacy (Wang and Biddle, 2001; see Kirk in this collection). More generally, there is a perceived need to increase choice and lessen compulsion (one retrospective study has identified that the perception of choice in adolescence is an important factor underpinning adult participation (Taylor et al, 1999).

The future direction of sports

Clearly the future direction of sport will be influenced by a wide range of factors – changing cultural attitudes, attitudes to health and fitness, educational access policies, the structure and distribution of free time, demographic changes (an aging population and a decline in 16-14 year olds), a growth of sports literacy and 'active ageing and policy interventions (early intervention programmes, health promotion initiatives). Clearly traditional sports will continue to exist and, in certain areas (eg women's football), expand. However, much of this analysis suggests that, in order to broaden the participation base and to contribute to the government's health agenda (Cabinet Office, 2002), there is a need to address the issue of 'life-time sports' and, almost certainly, re-define aspects of 'sport'. For example, there is a clear need to improve our understanding of processes of participation and retention

Here it is worth quoting a Sports Council analysis from 1991:

> "Mushrooming interest and participation in informal and casual sports much of it outside the governing body framework, highlights the need for traditional sporting structures to be sensitive to the needs of new members and to market their activities towards increasing the number of sports enthusiasts".

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Sport, Health and Economic Benefit

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Introduction

This paper reviews the literature and evidence on the costs to the economy of physical inactivity. It investigates the feasibility of quantifying the health benefits of sport and physical activity and attempts to provide estimates of the financial benefits of increasing activity levels. It concludes by attempting to identify the policy priorities and strategic priorities for sport as a contributor to the health of the nation.

Health Inequalities

Before we look at the evidence on sports participation and health it is important to highlight that the health status of different groups within the population varies considerably. The 1998 Acheson Report (Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health) reported the evidence on the relationship between health status and socio-economic group. The key findings of the Acheson Report were:

- Over the last twenty years, death rates have fallen among both men and women and across all social groups. However, the difference in rates between those at the top and the bottom of the social scale has widened. In the early 1970s, the mortality rate among men of working age was almost twice as high for those in the unskilled manual socioeconomic group as for those in the professional group. By the early 1990s, it was almost 3 times higher (see Appendix 1).

- These growing differences across the social spectrum were apparent for many of the major causes of death most notably for the main cause of death, coronary heart disease, where physical exercise has potentially the greatest health benefit (see Appendix 1).

- Although death rates have fallen and life expectancy has risen in all social groups, there is little evidence that the population is experiencing less morbidity or disability than 20 years ago. There has been a slight increase in self-reported long standing illness and limiting long standing illness, and socioeconomic differences are substantial. For example, in 1996 among the 45 to 64 age group, 17 per cent of professional men reported a limiting long standing illness compared to 48 per cent of unskilled manual men. Among women, 25 per cent of professional women and 45 per cent of unskilled women reported such a condition. These patterns were similar among younger adults, older men and among children.

- There is a clear social class gradient for both men and women in the proportion who smoke. In 1996, this ranged from 12 per cent of professional men to 41 per cent of men in unskilled manual occupations from 11 per cent to 36 per cent for women.

Overall inequalities by socioeconomic group can be demonstrated across a wide range of measures of health and the determinants of health.

Health Status and Sports Participation

It is now generally accepted that sport and physical activity can have an important positive impact on health. In particular (Exercise Referral Systems: A National Quality Assurance Framework, NHS, 2001):

- Regular physical activity decreases the risk of cardiovascular mortality in general and of CHD mortality in particular.

- Regular physical activity prevents or delays the development of high blood pressure, and reduces blood pressure in people with hypertension.

- Physical activity is also important in helping people to control their body weight, and in controlling diabetes.

- Specific forms of physical activity can help to reduce the risk of falls and accidents, by improving bone health and maintaining strength, co-ordination, cognitive functioning and balance.

- Physical activity reduces the risk of colon cancer, and evidence is growing to support links with other forms of cancer. Moderate intensity physical activity enhances the immune system.

- Physical activity reduces the risk of depression, and has positive benefits for mental health including reducing anxiety, and enhancing mood and self-esteem.

- Physical activity can play a valuable role in the prevention and treatment of non-specific chronic low back pain.

In adults, experts recommend that people need to do 30 minutes of physical activity of at least moderate intensity on five or more days per week.

The Health Survey for England (1998) found that around six out of ten men and seven out of ten women were not reaching these recommended levels of physical activity. It has been estimated that 37 per cent of Coronary heart Disease (CHD) deaths could be attributed to inactivity (British Cardiac Society et al 2000).

Evidence on higher health status levels (at least self-reported health status) is available from the General Household Survey 1996, which collects data on both health status and sports participation. Sports participants consistently report higher levels of health status then non-participants and this is true for men and women and across all age groups. In fact the gap in health status indicators between participants and non-participants gets wider in the older age categories.

Figure 1 shows that 62% of manual workers that took part in sport rated their health as ‘good’ over the last year compared with 40% of those in this group who did not take part in sport and, perhaps more significantly, 51% of those in the non-manual group. Although sports participation seems to go some way to eliminating health inequalities, it is still the case that sports participants in the non-manual group have higher levels of health status indicators then sports participants in the manual group (see Appendix 2). Appendix 2 also shows the interesting result that the intensity of participation (ie frequency of participation over a four-week period) is higher for the manual group than for the non-manual group. In fact, Table 2 in Appendix 2 shows that within the manual group the unskilled have the highest frequency of participation followed by the semi-skilled with the skilled having the lowest, exactly the opposite pattern to sport participation rates in these groups. Thus if sports policy can overcome the barrier to sports participation within the lowest socioeconomic groups, the evidence is that the frequency of participation will be sufficiently high to generate the health benefits discussed above.

Appendix 2 also shows that health status indicators from the GHS are substantially higher for sports participants than for non-participants for women as well as men and for all age groups in the manual socioeconomic groups. Figure 2 shows the typical pattern. The percentage of people rating their health as ‘good’ over the last year is higher for every age group among manual sports participants than among non-manual non-participants.

FIGURE 1

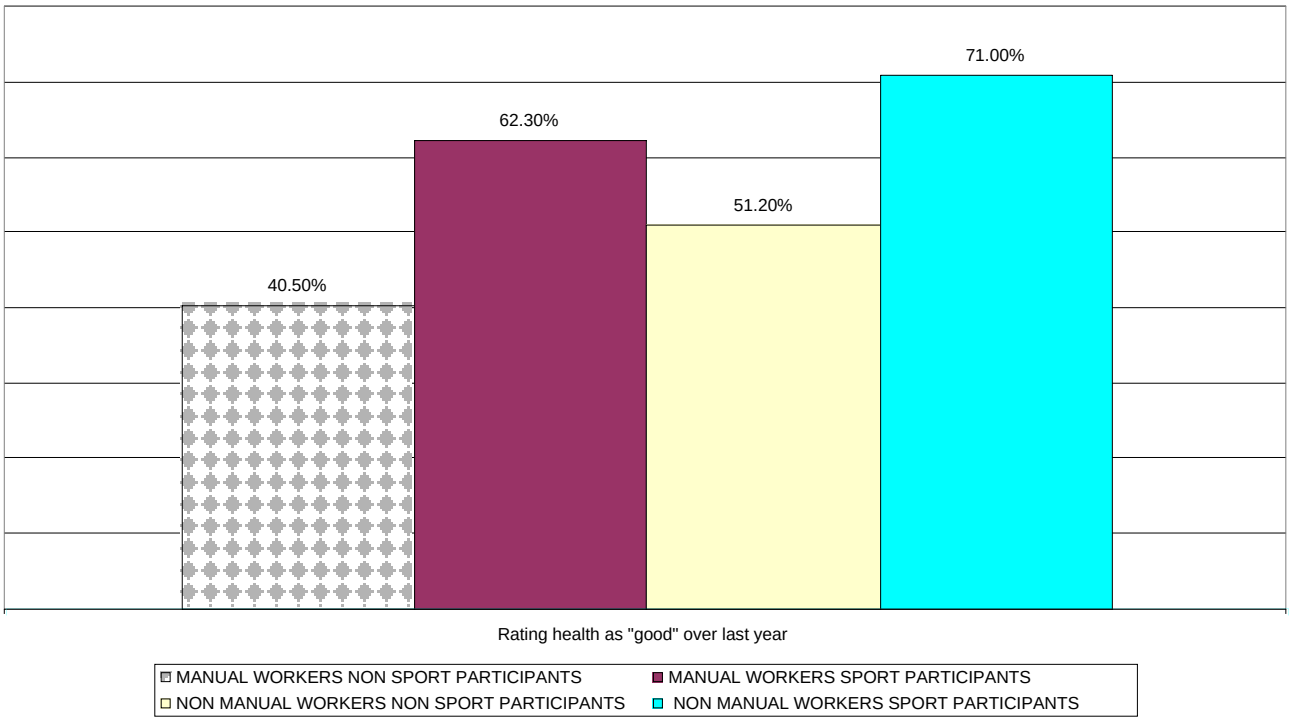
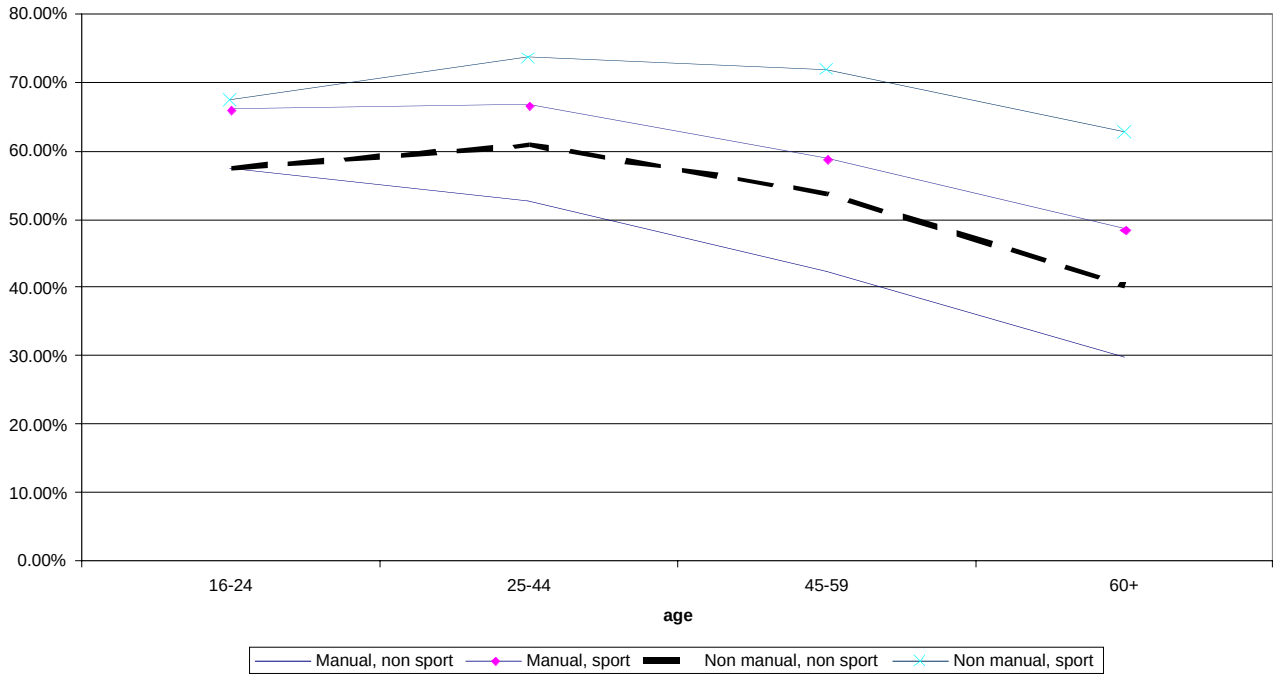


FIGURE 2
Percentage of people rating their health as 'good' over the last year



Sports Participation by DE Groups

Participation in sport by social groups DE is low in comparison with both other social groups and with the numbers of DE in England's population. Two major data sources verify this. First, the General Household Survey, which in 1996 reported the following participation rates in sport during the previous four weeks:

Social groups:	A	B	C1	C2	D	E
% of adult population participating in sport:	62.5%	52.1%	47.3%	45%	36.5%	23.5%

Second, Sport England's 1997 National Survey of Local Authority Sports Halls and Swimming Pools, which reported approximately 8% of users from social groups D and E compared with 20% of the population in these groups. The Sport England National Survey results were combined with other data for the construction of performance indicators and national benchmarks for local authority sports halls and pools. One indicator of particular relevance to this paper is the ratio: percentage of visits by social groups DE divided by the percentage of the catchment population in social groups DE.

The headline results for this performance indicator are as follows:

% visits from DE **% catchment population in DE**	25% benchmark	50% benchmark	75% benchmark
All facilities	0.2	0.4	0.6

Social classes DE are consistently and substantially underrepresented in visits to facilities, i.e. the ratio is less than 1. However, large, mixed facilities in high DE catchment areas hold out the prospect of 'better' utilisation by social groups DE, therefore a potentially greater return for an initiative targeted at these groups (see Appendix 3).

Thus we see the greatest potential for improving health status through increased participation in sport and physical activity is in these socioeconomic groups that have the lowest participation rates.

The Economic Costs of a Sedentary Population

Figure 3 is the estimate of the economic costs of physical inactivity in England that appeared in the DCMS/Strategy Unit's (2002) report, *Game Plan*. This report estimated the total cost of physical inactivity in England at £1.89 billion a year. It further went on to estimate that a 10% increase in adult activity would benefit England by £500 million a year.

The costs of physical inactivity are estimated by looking at three main areas of cost:

- Costs to the NHS;
- Costs of days absent from work;
- Costs of premature deaths.

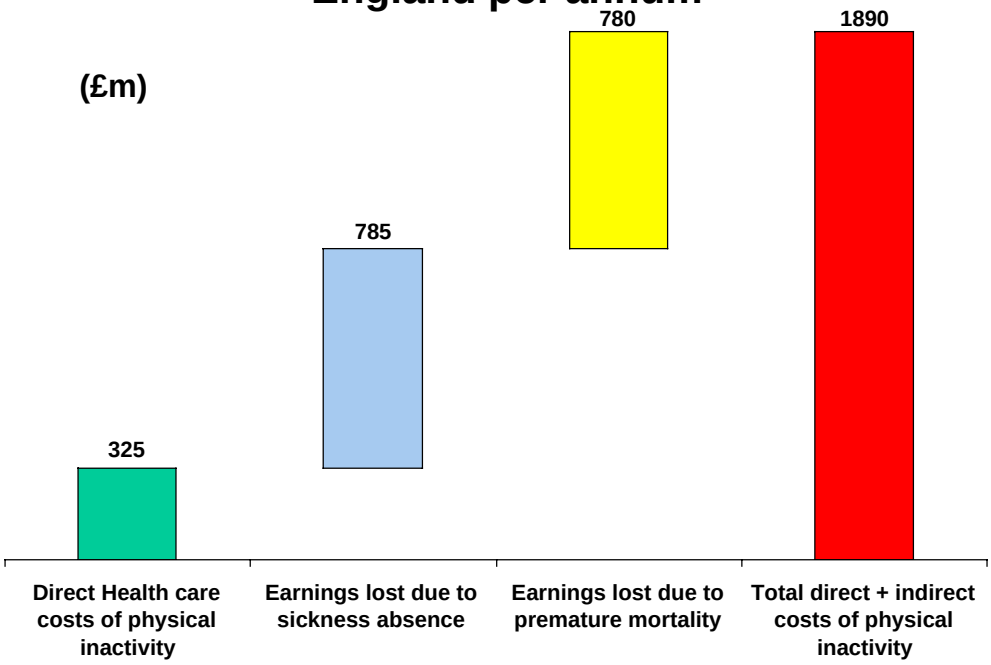
Figure 3 shows the estimated costs to the NHS as £326 million per year, the estimated costs of days absent from work as £785 million, and the estimated costs of premature deaths due to physical inactivity as £780 million per year. The problem with these estimates in *Game Plan* is that no explanation is given as to how these estimates are obtained. In the rest of this section an attempt will be made to verify these estimates using evidence from other countries where such estimates have also been made.

Direct healthcare costs of physical inactivity

Recent studies of the direct healthcare cost of physical inactivity have been carried out in both the United States (Colditz, 1999) and Canada (Katmarzyk, Gledhill, and Shephard, 2000). In a related study, Pronk, Goodman, and O'Connor (1999) analysed the relationship between modifiable health risks and short-term health care charges. This study, dealing with the situation in the United States

where health care is not provided free, examined the health care costs of over 5,000 adults aged 40 and over. Data was collected on health care charges, physical activity levels, smoking habits, and body weight over an 18 month period. They found that those that engaged in moderate physical activity, taking part three days per week, paid 15% less in health care charges than those that did no physical activity. There were similar benefits related to body weight and smoking status so that people who had never smoked and had a body mass index of 25 kg/m^2 who participated in physical activity on three days per week had average annual health care charges 49% lower than physically inactive smokers with a body mass index of 27.5kg/m^2.

Figure 3: The total cost of physical inactivity to England per annum



Source: Game Plan, DCMS and Strategy Unit Report, 2002

Colditz's study attempted to measure all three aspects discussed above of the cost of inactivity. For the health care costs, he estimated the population-attributable risk percentage (PAR) related to physical inactivity and multiplied this by the annual costs of illness caused by inactivity based on a review of previous studies on the effects of physical inactivity on health status. Based on the 1995 prevalence of inactivity in the United States of 28.8% of the adult population, he estimated that 2.4% of the total health care costs in the USA (or $24.3 billion) were due to physical inactivity.

Katzmarzyk, Gledhill, and Shephard (2000) carried out a similar study for Canada and came up with the estimate that 2.5% of total health care costs in Canada (or $2.1 billion) were due to physical inactivity, an estimate which is similar to that of Colditz which is perhaps not too surprising since the methodology was identical in both studies.

Applying such an estimate to the UK, which had a health budget of £68.1 billion in 2002-3 would suggest that £1.7 billion (2.5% of the total) was due to physical inactivity. The equivalent figure for England would be £1.4 billion, which is over four times larger than the estimate in Figure 3. Based on these studies of economies not that dissimilar to our own, it does seem these direct health care costs of physical inactivity have been severely underestimated in *Game Plan*.

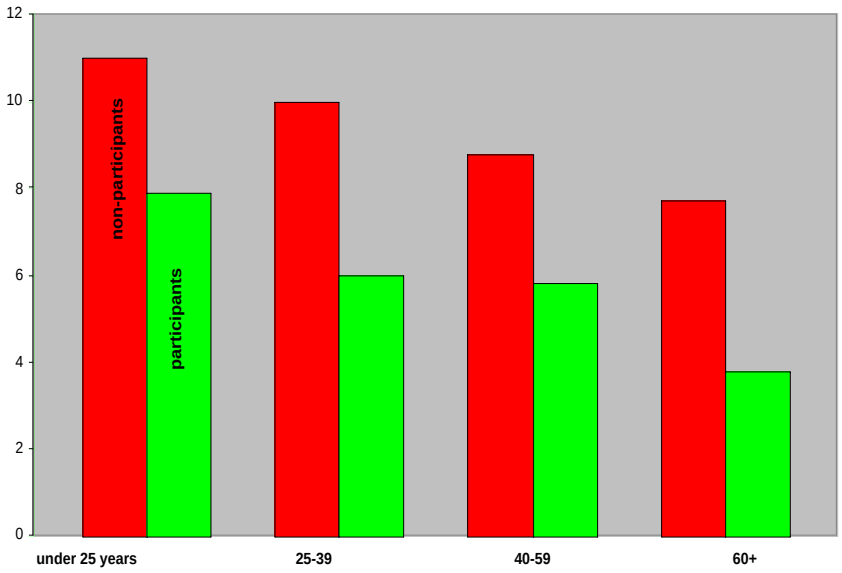
Costs from days off work

Absence from work cost the UK economy £11.6 billion in 2002 according to recent figures from the Confederation of British Industry. On average workers took 6.8 days off because of sickness, which is 2.9% of total working time. The cost per emplyee of sickness leave in 2002 was £476.

Gratton and Tice (1989) used data from the 1980 General Household Survey to analyse the relationship between sports participation and health status. Figure 4 shows data from that study

indicating wheter or not the repondent was 'away from work last week'. It clearly shows that sports participants have a much lower probability of being away from work than non-participants, for some age categories the probability is less than half that for non-participants. This figure cannot be reproduced using more recent data since the question on whether the respondent was away from work last week was dropped from the GHS in the early 1980s. Figure 4 clearly demonstrates the potential of sport and physical activity to reduce the economic costs of absence from work. £3.94 billion of the total cost of absence form work in the UK is due the non-participant group. Increasing the level of physical activity would not eliminate this cost completely, it would simply reduce it to the level of the participants.

Figure 4: % away from work last week



This would give an estimate of £1.3 billion as the cost of inactivity in the UK though days off work. For England this would be £1.1 billion, around 40% higher than the figure in Figure 3.

Costs of premature deaths

Katzmarzyk, Gledhill, and Shephard (2000) also estimated the costs of premature deaths due to inactivity. They did this by first obtaining the number of deaths among adults (20 years and over) in Canada in 1995 and multiplied the number of deaths from the main inactivity-related diseases by the population-attributable risk percentage (PAR) to estimate the number of deaths attributable to physical inactivity. They estimated the number of premature deaths attributable to physical inactivity to be 21,340 in 1995, or 10.3% of the total deaths among adults.

If we apply this percentage to the UK then this would suggest there are 34,000 premature deaths each year due to physical inactivity. If we estimate the economic costs of such premature deaths in terms of lost earnings this would amount to £803 million per year, which is only slightly higher than the equivalent estimate in Figure 3.

Overall the total direct and indirect cost of inactivity is £3.3 billion per year with the major difference from *Game Plan* being the much higher estimate for the direct health care costs of physical inactivity obtained using the USA and Canadian studies approach.

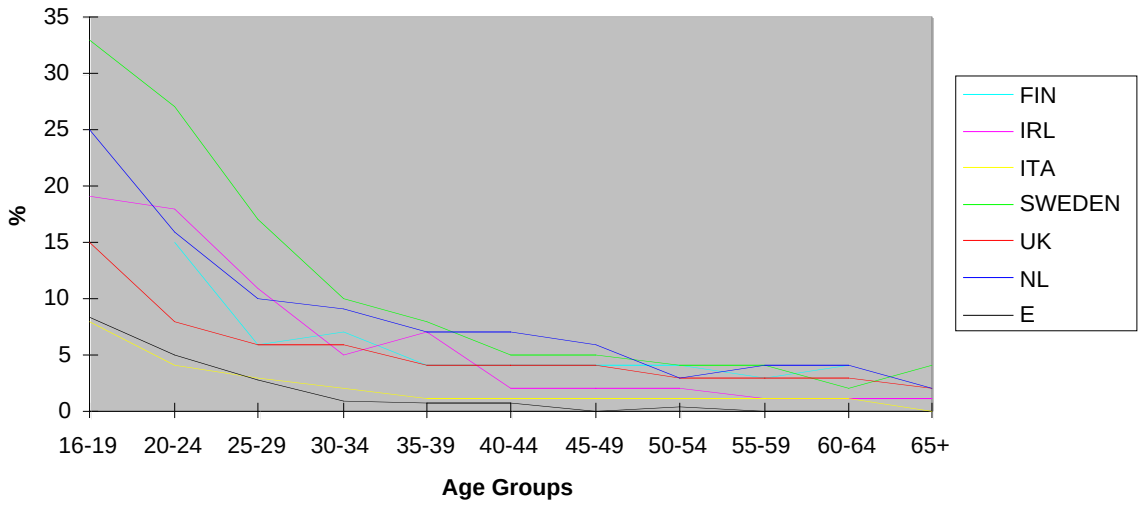
Strategic Priorities for Sports Policy

Although specific estimates may differ, one thing is clear: there is strong evidence that the economic costs of physical inactivity are substantial. What contribution can sport make to increasing levels of physical activity and reducing these costs? To answer this question we can again look to evidence from other countries. Game Plan points to Finland and Sweden as models since these countries with some of the highest rates of sport participation in Europe. It is stated in Game Plan that:

'In Finland and Sweden participation in organised and competitive sport actually increases amongst older people, due to the focus placed on this Group in these countries.' (Game Plan, p23)

The clear implication from this quote is that policy should be directed at encouraging older people to become more physically active by taking part in competitive and organised sport. However, when we look at comparative data for European countries we see quite clearly that the quote above is incorrect. Figure 5 shows how participation in competitive and organised sport varies with age across seven European countries including Sweden and Finland. These figures relate to 'intensive' participation, which is defined as taking part more than 120 times per year, or more than twice a week. It is clear that in all countries participation at this level declines steeply with age so that after the age of 30, less than 10 per cent of the adult population of these European countries is continuing to take part in competitive and organised sport at this level of intensity. After the age of 40 only a tiny minority of adult participants take part in intensive, competitive and organised sport.

Figure 5: Percentage in Group 1 (Competitive, Organised, and Intensive) by Age



However, Figure 6 shows another graph taken from the same study (UK Sport, 1999). This adds to the Figure 5 participants those that take part intensively, more than twice a week, but not in a competitive and organised situation. Figure 5 shows clearly the difference between Sweden and Finland and other European countries, including the UK. Sweden and Finland have much higher levels of participation than the other countries and participation increases in the older age groups. The essential point, however, is that it is **NOT** competitive and organised sport that gives this pattern. It is sports participants taking part with a high frequency (intensive) but not in a competitive and organised situation. Rather it is informal and non-competitive.

Figure 6: Percentage in Groups 1 (Competitive, Organised, and Intensive) and 2 (Intensive) by Age

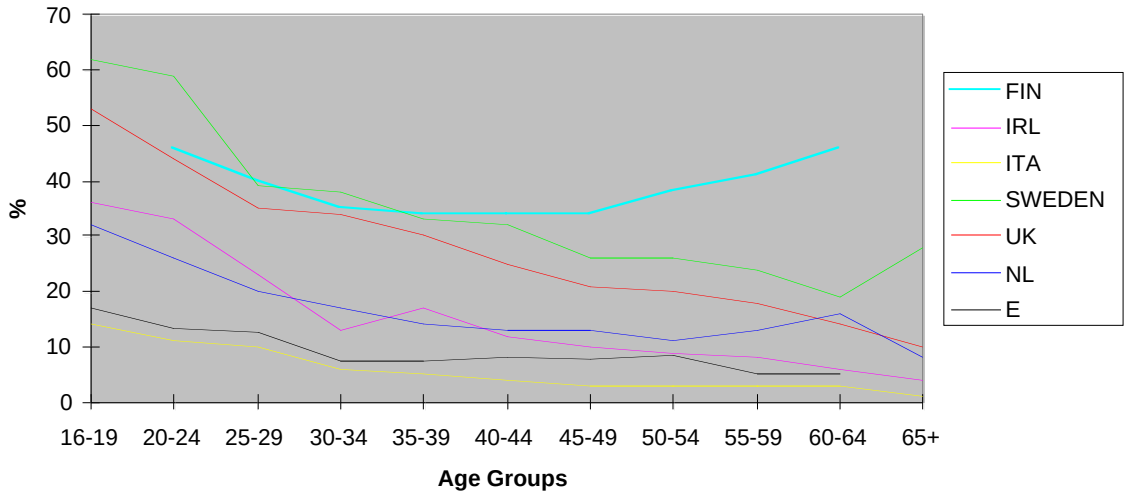


Table 1 makes the comparison between the UK and Finland. Both have similar rates of participation in the competitive, organised and intensive group, 5% of the adult population in the UK, and 6% in Finland. However, the big difference lies in the intensive group with 33% of the adult population of Finland taking part in sport more than twice a week but not competitively or in a club (ie organised). This figure is only 13% in the UK. The clear strategic priority is to increase the number of people taking part in sport and physical activity on a frequent basis but not necessarily competitively. This is what countries that have been successful with sport policies aimed at increasing the health of the population have managed to achieve.

Table 1.

	UK	*Finland*
Competitive, organised and intensive	5%	6%
Intensive	13%	33%

Conclusions

There is a large amount of evidence to show that health inequalities still persist, and have got worse in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Lower socio-economic groups consistently have lower health status than the rest of the population. These groups also have the lowest levels of sport participation.

There is also evidence to show that those in these groups that do take part in sport have higher health status indicators than those in higher socio-economic groups that do not participate in sport. Evidence presented in this paper suggests that sport does seem to deliver the health benefits. The costs to the country of an inactive population also seem to be much higher than previous estimates have suggested, particularly in the direct costs of physical inactivity to the health service. The strategic policy implication is clear: greater emphasis should be placed on encouragement to take part in sport and exercise as an important component of preventive health care. Policy intervention to increase participation needs to be concentrated in the non-competitive, informal area of sport participation since this is where it is most likely to attract the groups that will yield the highest health benefits from participation, older age groups and the lower socio-economic groups.

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Appendix 1

European standardised morality rates, by social class, selected causes, men aged 20-64

England and Wales, selected years

All Causes
rates per 100,000

Social Class *Year*

	1970-72	1979-83	1991-93
I Professional	500	373	280
II Managerial & Technical/ Intermediate	526	425	300
IIIN Non-manual Skilled	637	522	426
IIIM Skilled Manual	683	580	493
IV Semi Manual	721	639	492
V Unskilled Manual	897	910	806
England and Wales	624	549	419

Coronary heart disease
rates per 100,000

Social Class *Year*

	1970-72	1979-83	1991-93
I Professional	195	144	81
II Managerial & Technical/ Intermediate	197	168	92
IIIN Non-manual Skilled	245	208	136
IIIM Skilled Manual	232	218	159
IV Semi Manual	232	227	156
V Unskilled Manual	243	287	235
England and Wales	209	201	127

Source: Acheson (1998)

Appendix 2

Sports Participation and Health Status (General Household Survey 1996)

TABLE 1

	MANUAL WORKERS		NON MANUAL WORKERS	
	NON SPORT PARTICIPANTS	SPORT PARTICIPANTS	NON MANUAL NON SPORT PARTICIPANTS	NON MANUAL SPORT PARTICIPANTS
Limited long standing illness	38.20%	18.70%	30.50%	15.80%
Long standing illness	51.80%	34.80%	45.40%	29.50%
Smoking cigarettes	48.30%	45.00%	35.50%	30.20%
How good or bad current health (index?)	67.92	80.54	75.25	83.26
Rating health as "good" over last year	40.50%	62.30%	51.20%	71.00%
Consulted doctor in last 2 wks	21.40%	15.10%	21.00%	15.80%
Hospital outpatient attendance-3 months	19.20%	15.30%	18.60%	12.60%
Average frequency of participation -4wks (among participants)		10.45		9.7

TABLE 2

	UNSKILLED MANUAL		SEMI SKILLED MANUAL		SKILLED MANUAL	
	non sport	sport participants	non sport	sport participant	non sport	sport participant
Limited long standing illness	39.50%	20.40%	36.90%	18.60%	39.10%	18.60%
Long standing illness	52.30%	35.10%	49.70%	35.40%	53.70%	34.40%
Smoking cigarettes	55.50%	57.40%	51.70%	51.50%	42.50%	38.10%
How good or bad current health (index?)	67.86	77.9	70.86	79.55	71.55	81.74
Rating health as "good" over last year	35.20%	54.50%	41.20%	58.30%	42.00%	66.60%
Consulted doctor in last 2 wks	22.60%	15.70%	22.20%	16.80%	20.00%	13.60%
Hospital outpatient attendance-3 months	19.20%	13.10%	19.10%	14.90%	19.30%	16.00%
Average frequency of participation -4wks (among participants)		12.14		10.42		10.21

TABLE 3

	MEN- MANUAL		WOMEN MANUAL	
	non sport	sport participants	non sport	sport participant
Limited long standing illness	38.50%	18.60%	38.00%	19.00%
Long standing illness	52.70%	35.60%	50.90%	33.60%
Smoking cigarettes	44.20%	43.50%	53.20%	48.00%
How good or bad current health (index?)	71.47	80.59	69.86	80.46
Rating health as "good" over last year	43.00%	64.70%	38.20%	57.90%
Consulted doctor in last 2 wks	17.90%	13.50%	24.70%	18.00%
Hospital outpatient attendance-3 months	18.60%	15.80%	19.90%	14.30%
Average frequency of participation -4wks (among participants)		11.17		9.16

TABLE 4

	16-24 MANUAL		25-44 MANUAL		45-59 MANUAL		60+ MANUAL	
	non sport	sport participants	non sport	sport participant	non sport	sport participant	non sport	sport participant
Limited long standing illness	11.10%	10.40%	22.90%	15.90%	38.20%	21.40%	51.10%	33.60%
Long standing illness	20.60%	22.60%	34.00%	31.00%	52.70%	41.20%	66.00%	52.50%
Smoking cigarettes	75.20%	62.80%	66.60%	50.70%	50.20%	36.10%	32.00%	22.40%
How good or bad current health (index?)	76.36	81.73	76.13	81.08	71.67	81.35	65.78	76.32
Rating health as "good" over last year	57.30%	66.00%	52.70%	66.70%	42.30%	58.80%	29.80%	48.50%
Consulted doctor in last 2 wks	17.60%	15.60%	20.30%	14.30%	21.10%	13.80%	22.70%	18.80%
Hospital outpatient attendance-3 months	13.10%	17.70%	14.80%	14.40%	19.10%	14.40%	22.80%	16.50%
Average frequency of participation -4wks (among participants)		12.98		10.35		9.12		9.78

Appendix 3

Benchmarks for representativeness of social groups DE in visiting local authority sports halls and pools, 1997

% visits from DE / % catchment population in DE	25% benchmark	50% benchmark	75% benchmark
All facilities	0.2	0.4	0.6
i) by type of facility			
dry with outdoor	0.3	0.4	0.6
dry without outdoor	0.3	0.5	0.7
mixed with outdoor	0.3	0.5	0.7
mixed without outdoor	0.4	0.6	0.8
wet	0.1	0.2	0.3
ii) by DE in catchment population			
< 15%	0.1	0.3	0.5
15 to < 20%	0.2	0.3	0.6
20%+	0.2	0.4	0.6
iii) by size of facility			
< 1500 sq.m.	0.2	0.3	0.6
1500 to < 3000 sq.m.	0.1	0.3	0.5
3000+ sq.m.	0.3	0.5	0.7

Notes: 25%, 50% and 75% benchmarks are the _, _, and _ points in the distribution of scores.

The catchment population is defined as within 15 minutes drive time.

Volunteering, the countryside and local delivery

Driving up participation: Sport and Volunteering

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Synopsis

Recent research completed for Sport England on *Sports Volunteering in England, 2002* demonstrates the problems and the potential of the voluntary sports sector in driving up participation. Two key questions are addressed in this paper:

- What potential for development of participation in sport lies in the voluntary sports sector?
- To what extent is external stimulation for any purpose, including for the development of participation in sport, relevant to voluntary sports organisations?

The Sport England research demonstrates a spectrum of voluntary sport organisations in terms of their organisational culture. At one end of the spectrum are organisations which are traditional and informal, whilst at the other are more contemporary, formal organisations. Both types of organisations are capable of growth in participation, but for traditional, informal type it is more likely to be ad hoc, unplanned growth, responding to increasing demand. Contemporary, formal organisations have the managerial skills and techniques to promote development in a more systematic, planned manner.

Considerable problems constrain the potential of many voluntary sports organisations, in particular a shortage of volunteers, increased workloads and volunteer recruitment difficulties. These problems affect all types of voluntary sports organisations, not just the traditional, informal type. However, this type of organisation is less likely to shake off the problems and more likely to survive in a constrained form, whilst contemporary, formal organisations are more likely to plan and act to overcome the problems.

A distinguishing feature between these two types of organisation is the way they react to problems and pressures. The traditional, informal organisations are less likely to seek help externally, and are more resistant to perceived 'interference' from outside. The contemporary, formal organisations are more likely to seek opportunities to develop, despite the problems and pressures - they are consequently more receptive to external assistance.

A significant minority of organisations in the voluntary sports sector are aware of external assistance for their volunteers, although less have made use of such assistance. The Sport England research identifies key considerations concerning such assistance. The language used is important because it needs to reflect the culture of the organisation – voluntary sports organisations are not businesses, they are organisations motivated by mutual enthusiasm and social benefits; they require 'help', not 'management'. Any external assistance needs to be 'smart' in the sense of minimising increases in workloads of volunteers. The substitution of paid work for volunteering should be handled with great care, because of the added pressures it might put on volunteers.

Despite the problems with the voluntary sector in respect of development potential and its patchy response to external initiatives, it is too big to ignore. In particular, the research discloses a total adult sports volunteer force of 5.8 million people. The key characteristics of these volunteers in relation to the development of sports participation are their enthusiasm and social motivations. Harnessing these qualities in attracting new members/participants is the challenge for Sport England.

Any initiative to engineer growth in participation in the voluntary sector, however, will involve a considerable degree of inefficiency because of the problems in the sector. Nevertheless, the conclusion of this paper is that the voluntary sector should be treated seriously as an agent for driving up participation. To this end, Sport England should actively seek resources to extend and improve VIP; create smart solutions to promoting activity development in voluntary sports organisations without increasing workloads; and expand sports development services in local authorities, particularly to stimulate school-club links.

Introduction

This paper uses as its source of reference recent work completed for Sport England on *Sports Volunteering in England, 2002* by a team led by the author. This work comprised substantial primary research of the voluntary sector in sport, i.e.

- Questions on volunteering in sport in a national Omnibus survey, conducted by BMRB International. There were 8,458 respondents.
- 1,005 telephone interviews with representatives of national governing bodies, regional/county associations, and clubs in 88 sports recognised by Sport England, plus schools, universities and colleges, major events, youth organisations, disability organisations, and local authorities.
- Questionnaire surveys of 308 sports volunteers and 94 young people in 48 sports clubs, in 12 sports (athletics, badminton, bowls, cricket, football, gymnastics, hockey, netball, rugby union, sailing, swimming and tennis).
- 72 focus groups in sports clubs in the same 12 sports, with volunteers (51 groups) and young people (21 groups).

The main purposes of this research were not to identify the role of the voluntary sector in sport in driving up participation in sport. They were to quantify the contribution made to English sport by volunteers; and identify the nature of volunteering, challenges and support for volunteers and volunteer managers, and the benefits of sports volunteering. Nevertheless, the research does reveal evidence of considerable relevance to the purpose of this paper.

The government report *Game Plan* has a vision and policy priority for grassroots participation. It also makes a clear statement that "It is crucial that the role of volunteers in sport is fully supported, with an emphasis on better capacity building." (DCMS 2002, paragraph 7.19). The implication is that the voluntary sector has a role to play in fulfilling the policy objective of increasing grassroots participation, but *Game Plan* does not explicitly and directly link this objective to the support for the voluntary sector. The evidence from the recent research into sports volunteering provides a suitable test of the proposition that the voluntary sector has a significant role to play in stimulating sports participation.

One definitional issue needs clarification at the outset. 'Participation in sport' for the purposes of this paper is actively playing sport, i.e. it does not include volunteering. However, a broader view of participation in sport would include volunteering, because although many volunteers do not play sport, they nevertheless directly contribute and are essential to the playing of sport. Interestingly, although *Game Plan* discusses the interaction between mass participation, competition at the highest level, and hosting major events, it does not consider the interaction between mass participation and volunteering, which is more continuous and likely to be much more significant. Furthermore, volunteers are contributing to active citizenship – their 'participation' in sport has a social and economic value in its own right, the development of which, it could be argued, should be part of Sport England's agenda. Nevertheless, this paper will concentrate on issues relevant to the voluntary sector's possible contribution to more people playing more sport.

Two key questions are addressed in this paper:

- What potential for development of participation in sport lies in the voluntary sports sector?
- To what extent is external stimulation for any purpose, including for the development of participation in sport, relevant to voluntary sports organisations?

For the first of these questions, it is necessary to look at the nature of voluntary sports organisations, the motives of volunteers, and the pressures and constraints facing them and their organisations – all of which are analysed in the recent Sport England research. An analysis of these considerations is a precondition for policy development through the voluntary sector – it has to be capable of response if it is called upon by Sport England strategy implementation to help develop sport.

For the second question, the research contains evidence of what external assistance voluntary sports organisations are aware of, what they have used and what they think about Sport England's main vehicle for support for volunteers in sport, the Volunteer Investment Programme (VIP).

Voluntary sports organisations

The Sport England research demonstrates a spectrum of voluntary sport organisations in terms of their organisational culture. At one end of the spectrum are organisations which are traditional and informal, whilst at the other are more contemporary, formal organisations. A description of each extreme is relevant to an assessment of the potential of such organisations for development of participation, since one end represents hope, whilst the other represents inertia.

Traditional, informal organisations

This type of organisation has been well documented in previous research of voluntary sports clubs. It was described by Hoggett and Bishop (1985) as groups of 'mutual enthusiasts' and this typifies their collective strength and identity. Some of the main characteristics of this type of organisation are as follows:

- Motivations compatible with mutual enthusiasm and social benefits: the most commonly cited motivations for sports volunteers in the focus groups were both intrinsic - friendship and enjoyment, giving something back – and extrinsic - parents wanting to help their children.

- A proud culture of informality, which translates to active resistance to the relevance of terms such as 'management' or even 'volunteering'. The organisation is more of a co-operative than a business. It can be very effective, with some of the best examples of implicit contracts for members to contribute to the organisation of their club being of this type. On the other hand, it is often not effective, which exacerbates the problems identified in the next section of this paper.

- Pragmatic solutions to resulting problems, e.g. key volunteers staying in post for far longer than they anticipated, and taking on more duties as other volunteers are not replaced. Multi-tasking is not unusual in voluntary sports organisations – in the Omnibus survey results, on average each volunteer had fulfilled 4.65 different volunteering roles in the previous year.

- These organisations are reactive rather than proactive. This is not seen as crisis- management, although it often has the characteristics of this. Rather it is the spirit of 'mucking in', reinforcing the co-operative culture, but often this spirit is only manifested in a loyal core of key volunteers.

- Professionalisation, in the sense of more formal management, is seen as a fundamental threat to the culture of the organisation. "It would be like paid work without the pay."

- Mistrust of assistance on offer from external sources. This is seen as extra work and these organisations are too constrained in resources to even acknowledge or investigate the offers from outside, let alone seek them.

Contemporary, formal organisations

There does appear to be a cultural change occurring in some voluntary sports organisations; a change which poses a serious alternative to the traditional/formal type above. The characteristics of this contemporary/formal organisation are as follows:

- The same primary social motivations as traditional/informal organisations: friendship, giving something back, the parental motive, but these organisations are more likely to simultaneously want the club to do well, not just in playing performance but also in organisational performance.

- Professionalisation is seen as a response to pressures. These organisations are more likely to adopt paid work procedures and more receptive to paying for work, e.g. coaches.

- More formal and managerialist in approach, but often not seeing it as that, they are more likely to use procedures such as audits of volunteering potential, mentoring, job descriptions, and training. Some even have volunteer co-ordinators.

- These organisations are more proactive in anticipating development and in planning to resolve problems and taking actions to deliver the plans.

- More systematic and managerialist in promoting an explicit 'contribution culture' - whereby each member is expected to do their bit to help in the organisation of the club – not taking it for granted and moaning when it doesn't happen.

- Receptive to external assistance, welcoming it and seeking it for resolving problems and for development. Whilst the better organised might instigate planning procedures to exploit external sources of assistance, others are more opportunistic in seeking assistance. The key difference from traditional/informal organisations is that these contemporary/formal organisations are not mistrustful of or hostile to external agencies

The research evidence suggests that there are inspiring examples of both types. It would be a mistake to assume that only the contemporary, formal organisations are successful and offer participation development potential. Motivations such as social benefits (friendship, enjoyment) may at first sight seem incompatible with improvements in the organisation of a club and initiatives to grow participation in sport – in fact they are one root to the image of sports clubs being exclusive rather than inclusive. However, among more contemporary/formal organisations social motivations were still very important and they were seen by some as being essential to the appeal of the club to new members. There is no reason why these motivations shouldn't create participation growth in the same way in traditional/informal organisations. However, whilst in these organisations growth occurs almost accidentally, and may be actively resisted by the employment of membership waiting lists, in contemporary/formal organisations growth is by design and is less likely to be resisted.

It would also be a mistake to assume that common problems and pressures only face the traditional, informal organisations. However, this type of organisation is less likely to shake off the problems and more likely to survive in a constrained form, whilst contemporary/formal organisations are more likely to plan and act to overcome the problems and constraints, rather than learning to live with them.

One distinguishing feature between these two extreme types of organisation is the way they react to problems and pressures. The traditional/informal organisations are more likely to concentrate on core tasks and not even consider developmental opportunities – the more perceptive respondents of this type in the research openly admitted that development was a luxury that they had no time for. This makes them less likely to seek help externally, and possibly strengthens their independence and resistance to perceived 'interference' from outside, it being seen as 'more work' which they haven't got the resources to deal with. The contemporary/formal organisations are more likely to seek opportunities to develop, despite the problems and pressures. They are consequently more amenable to external assistance and more likely to actively seek it, because that is part of their organisational culture.

It is not possible from the research to deduce that X% of voluntary sports organisations are of the traditional/informal type and Y% of the contemporary/formal type. However, the impression is that more organisations lie towards the traditional/informal extreme than the contemporary/formal extreme. The research did not identify why an organisation might be of a particular type but it is relatively easy to speculate on the possible reasons: for example, key individual volunteers (chair, secretary) promoting particular cultures or changes; or the demands of members for action to remedy perceived poor quality services.

Problems and pressures

So far it is the contention of this paper that there will be difficulties in engineering growth in sports participation through the traditional/informal organisations because of their very culture. If growth occurs through them it will be fortuitous rather than engineered. On the other hand, contemporary/formal organisations offer much more potential for an engineered growth. However, the situation is made more complex and development potential further constrained by a set of problems faced by voluntary sports organisations. These include the following:

- There are not enough people volunteering in sports clubs: nearly three-quarters of club volunteers surveyed acknowledged this problem.

- Falling volunteer numbers in the last five years were reported by 40% of sports organisations telephoned.

- volunteer recruitment difficulties were indicated by over a third of national governing bodies (NGBs) and clubs.

- Multi-tasking and merging key positions were common tactics to overcome recruitment difficulties.

- An ageing volunteer force was reported by organisations in 38% of the 88 sports researched. Core administrative roles - chairs, secretaries and treasurers – tend to be filled by older people than other roles, the most common age for these core roles being 45-59 years. Over 60% of the chairs and secretaries interviewed had volunteered at their organisation for ten years or more.

- Increased time inputs from volunteers was reported by organisations in nearly 70% of the sports researched. Typically this was because of increased workloads rather than simply because of a shortage of volunteers causing fewer volunteer to share a stable workload. Out of the core volunteers surveyed in sports clubs, 35% contributed 250 hours a year or more, equivalent to five hours a week or more for the year. The increased time inputs appear to be most acute at the regional and county levels in the sports administration hierarchy, with pressures to implement and disseminate changes in NGB and procedures.

- Increased bureaucracy is a common complaint, with NGBs and legislation (e.g. child protection, Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) procedures) often blamed for this. NB legislation such as child protection is seen as necessary but it still increases workloads, which is off-putting to volunteers. Increasingly, schools are inclined to not seek volunteers to help with school sport, because of the CRB procedures; whilst some young persons organisations feel CRB procedures are off-putting to potential volunteers, particularly parents.

- Another common complaint was of a 'pay and play' attitude by members and a 'childminding' attitude by parents of young members. Again, more perceptive respondents acknowledge the reasons for these attitudes, but still regretted their increasing prevalence.

Therefore a combination of problems conspire to create considerable constraints to the development potential of voluntary sports organisations. In particular a shortage of volunteers, increased workloads and volunteer recruitment difficulties are more likely to drive the traditional/formal organisations into a 'bunker mentality', concentrating on core operational tasks and foregoing more strategic issues. These are not new problems. Earlier research in 1995 (Sports Council 1996) identified the same sort of issues. However, there are indications in the new evidence that the problems are worsening.

The underlying reasons for these pressures are identified in the research findings and include societal reasons:

- increased choice and competition for people's leisure time and expenditure;

- a 'time squeeze' caused not only by the greater choice but also increasing time devoted to paid work and childcare, particularly in the higher socioeconomic groups – the ones with the strongest representation in sports participation; lack of time is the most important reason for people giving up volunteering in sport according to the research, as well the most important constraint preventing interested non-volunteers from volunteering;

- greater expectations of higher quality service delivery by members of voluntary organisations;

- and also institutional reasons:

- central government and Sport England requirements and initiatives, e.g. greater accountability for funds received, social inclusion, equal access, child protection;

- NGB standards and requirements, e.g. coach training and registration, member registration.

Interim conclusion

Thus far the implications are rather bleak. Faced with a conspiracy of problems caused by societal changes and national institutions' requirements, voluntary sports organisations are hard pressed to deliver their core activities, and many are doing so with diminishing and increasingly hard-pressed volunteer resources. The scope for such organisations taking a lead role in developing participation in sport seems as remote as hoping for significant extra funds for local authority sports development from the Exchequer.

However, the picture is not all black and to give up on voluntary organisations as agents for the development of sports participation on the grounds above would be premature. Voluntary sports

organisations which are of the contemporary/formal type have the managerial skills and techniques to promote development and respond to external initiatives. In addition the research indicates:

- Whilst 40% of voluntary sports organisations have falling volunteer numbers, another 40% have increasing volunteer numbers.
- The majority of voluntary sports organisations contacted did not report volunteer recruitment difficulties.
- The most frequently identified reason for the increasing workloads in voluntary sports organisations contacted was not greater bureaucracy and persistent volunteer shortages, but rather increased activity, such as expansion of membership numbers, new junior sections, new female teams/competition, new veterans' teams/competition, and new events.

Therefore, expansion of participation is occurring in parts of the voluntary sports sector, because of increasing demand, combined with the capacity and willingness of voluntary sports organisations to accommodate expansion. To what extent such growth is at least in part facilitated with external assistance, rather than purely organic growth, is not known. Nevertheless, there are sufficient positives in the participation development potential of some voluntary sports organisations to take us on to the next key question.

External assistance for voluntary sports organisations

The extent to which voluntary sports organisations show awareness and have made use of external assistance is one test of the possible extent of contemporary/formal organisations. This is particularly the case when one of the defining differences in such organisations is their attitude to external assistance.

Assistance from National Governing Bodies

NGBs are by far the most frequently acknowledged and used source of assistance to volunteers in sports clubs. 39% of clubs were aware of assistance from their NGBs, whilst 21% of clubs had actually received assistance for volunteers from their NGBs. The catch with NGBs, however, is that as well as being acknowledged as a source of assistance, they are also a major source of increased bureaucracy, so as agents of change and growth they are a mixed blessing.

Local authorities

Of the voluntary sports clubs contacted, 16% were aware of assistance from their local authorities, whilst 10% had received assistance for volunteers from their local authorities. In a survey of 50 local authority representatives, typically working in sports development, there was a common and strong willingness to work with sports clubs. In fact sports clubs were almost universally acknowledged to be essential to sports development work. However, local authorities are working under tight resource constraints, especially in sports development where, except in a few large metropolitan districts with large teams, the service is often delivered by one of two full-time staff. So the capacity of local authority sports development services to engineer participation development within their voluntary sports sector is severely constrained.

Sport England's Volunteer Investment Programme

The VIP works either through agents such as NGBs and local authorities, or direct through mailing and a website. The awareness and use of VIP increases as you move up the organisational hierarchy:

- 26% of clubs interviewed had heard of VIP, 5% had used it;
- 44% of regional/county level volunteers had heard of VIP, 11% had used it;
- 70% of NGBs had heard of VIP, 16% had used it.

Clearly there is a promotional challenge here – to raise the levels of use to nearer the levels of awareness.

Key issues in external stimuli to voluntary sport

From qualitative research as part of the Sport England research, there are some clear messages about the nature of any intended assistance to voluntary sports organisations. Three key attributes of assistance need to be actively acknowledged.

First the language used is important because it reflects the culture of the organisation. Voluntary sports organisations of all types are more akin to social organisations than businesses. Even when the organisation is more contemporary/formal, their self identity is strongly social. Terms such as 'management', 'strategy' and even 'volunteers' are inappropriate to the typical culture of voluntary clubs. Terms which are more appropriate to the nature of voluntary sports organisations include 'organisation', 'help', 'improve', and 'members'.

Second, any assistance needs to help voluntary sports organisations create the space to develop their activities. It needs to be 'smart' in the sense of minimising increases in workloads of volunteers whose time is heavily loaded and constrained. One NGB was praised by its members for simplifying its registration scheme, whilst other NGBs were criticised for introducing complex club accreditation schemes, or arduous coaching qualifications and registration procedures. The latter examples are not smart and although they appear to raise standards in these sports, they are counterproductive to volunteer retention and recruitment, and to participation growth.

Third, the substitution of paid work for volunteering should be handled with great care. There appear to be no serious problems with the principle of paid workers in voluntary sports organisations, even in sports clubs. Coaches are a very pertinent example. However, there are concerns about the increasing payment culture. First, the payment of administrators at the NGB level creates added pressures of workload for volunteers at the regional and county levels. Second, a possible management problem is when volunteer coaches need to be recruited, against an increasing culture of payment, and possibly working alongside paid coaches. The relational aspects of this situation requires sensitive management. Third, another possible problem is the sustainability of paid coaches. This concern was expressed most strongly in the survey of local authority representatives. At the moment, initiatives such as Active Sports and the forthcoming Community Coaches are spreading a culture of payment for sports coaching, which some local authority sports development officers think is increasing expectations of payment among other coaches. If initiatives such as these pay for thousands of sports coaches for a limited period of time, and other organisations cannot afford to continue the payments when the project funding stops, there will be problems increasing the recruitment of volunteer coaches again if and when the funding runs out.

Conclusions

Many of the problems and constraints facing voluntary sports organisations cannot be solved from inside sport – they are caused ultimately by societal changes and/or pressures from central government. Stimulating much of the voluntary sports sector to undertake new developments to help drive up sports participation will be very difficult against the backcloth of societal changes, institutional pressures, volunteer shortages, increasing volunteer workloads and volunteer recruitment difficulties.

Nevertheless, the voluntary sector is too big to ignore. According to the Sport England research there are well over 8 million members of voluntary sports clubs affiliated to NGBs, which is a substantial participation base. Even small rates of growth in this sector will represent significant increases in sports participation. More importantly, the research discloses a total adult sports volunteer force of 5.8 million people. These include volunteers contributing in unaffiliated sports organisations and those contributing informally for family and friends rather than within organisations. The key characteristics of these volunteers in relation to development of sports participation are their enthusiasm and social motivations. Harnessing these qualities in attracting new members/participants is the challenge for Sport England.

Any initiative to engineer growth in participation in the voluntary sector, however, will involve a lot of waste in the sense of inefficiency. This is because not all the sector is amenable to external policies and incentives – in fact probably a minority of sports organisations are likely to respond positively. The inefficiency of policy delivery through the voluntary sector is exacerbated by the difficulty of identifying the appropriate targets - the contemporary/formal organisations which are receptive to development incentives. Thus some of the resources to stimulate participation development will 'fall on stony ground'. But this is not a new situation – many economic development initiatives suffer failures which at least partially offset the successes; many people trained in specific skills move to other vocations; some lottery projects fail; etc., etc.

Nevertheless, an inefficiently stimulated voluntary sports sector may offer as good or better prospects for participation growth than a heavily constrained public sports provision sector, or a commercial sector with relatively narrow sporting interests. To this end, Sport England should actively seek resources to achieve the following:

- Extension and improvement of VIP
- Smart solutions to promoting activity development without increasing workloads
- Expansion of sports development services in local authorities, particularly to stimulate school-club links.

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Sport and the Countryside: Driving up Participation in Sport

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Preface

The Government report *Game Plan (2002)* makes virtually no reference to the natural environment or the countryside as a venue for sport (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002). As a result there is little discussion of a whole range of actions being undertaken by the Government (through DEFRA), by Statutory Bodies such as the Countryside Agency, English Nature and by the non-profit sector, all of which have a relevance to driving up participation in sport and recreation. This omission is important when it is realised that around 25 per cent of all activity traditionally associated with the remit of Sport England takes place in the countryside. Also *Game Plan* makes no reference to the land use planning system, which protects and promotes new facilities and space for sport and physical activity, and the large volume of new advice issued by the Government on planning for sport in 2002 (ODPM, 2002a; ODPM, 2002b). In particular, the positive role of land use planning in securing potentially large sums of money for sports provision from developers' contributions in rural (as well as urban) areas is not included (Sport England, 2001).

This paper therefore comprises an excursion into territory which has been a low priority for Sport England in recent years, but where others have been active. The bodies and groups covered in this paper look, however, to Sport England for a lead in issues of sport and physical activity in the countryside. Also, sport in the countryside has much to contribute to the three current Government agendas of:

- Sport and health;
- Sport and social exclusion; and
- Sport and sustainable development.

This paper covers organised sport in the countryside, but is also about *recreation*; that is physical activities such as taking a walk near to home, going for a cycle ride or sailing on a local river.

Participation in the Countryside and the Use of Natural Resources

The countryside is of increasing importance as a location for sport and recreation. Walking, the main countryside activity, is complemented by significant participation in angling, horse riding, cycling and mountain biking, a wide range of water-based sports (including water skiing), golf, mountaineering, airsports and land-based motorsports. These activities use many types of natural resource, including rivers and estuaries, heath and moorland, as well as disused quarries and airfields. Rights of Way (189,000kms in England) are a key resource, as are bridleways and Restricted Byways, formerly known as Roads Used as Public Paths.

Published data suggest the use of the countryside for sport and recreation is extensive and is growing. It is estimated that there were some 59 million day trips to the countryside in the year 2000. The level of such visits to the countryside is believed to have increased over the last decade; data from the Leisure Day Visits Survey for 1998 showing large increases from its 1994 counterpart (Countryside Agency, 2001). Over 80 per cent of country park managers in a recent survey saw participation increasing or staying at current levels (Countryside Agency, 2003).

Walking brings fitness and health benefits, and the enjoyment of recreation in pleasant surroundings has well documented emotional and psychological benefits (Pretty et alia., 2002). It is here that links with the 'philosophy' of *Game Plan* are strong.

Among sport and recreation, the study *State of the Countryside 2002,* shows that:

- 25 per cent of trips to the countryside involve a walk of more than two miles;
- 16 per cent involve swimming; and
- 7 per cent include cycling or mountain biking.

Lesser proportions of people are involved in sailing, fishing, riding, shooting, mountaineering and rock climbing (Countryside Agency, 2002). Among individual watersports, there are estimated to be around

250,000 participants in windsurfing, and around 200,000 in each of sailing and waterskiing. In most cases only small proportions of these participants are in membership of the formal governing bodies of the sports (Sport England, 2001).

There is a range of pressures on countryside resources used for sport. These include:

- resistance from vocal rural residents to activities which can create noise and additional travel through villages;
- opposition from nature conservation interests who perceive environmental damage resulting from some sports activities;
- restrictions on some forms of sporting activities in designated areas such as green belts, and National parks which are not deemed as fitting the purposes of designation;
- competition between sports for the same space, often requiring complex arrangements for the local management of sites or waterspace as a result.

To help counteract site loss Sport England are identifying Sites of Special Significance for Sport (SASPs) of national and regional importance in the countryside. These can be of particular importance to sports seeking to maintain a network of regional centres of excellence. Criteria for the definition of sites were published in 1999 (Sport England, 1999). The aim is to see such sites included in development plans and Regional Spatial Strategies, together with policies for their protection. Pilot projects are currently underway in some Sport England Regions.

It has been demonstrated that sport and recreation activities can take place successfully in environments highly valued for conservation, such as National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Areas of outstanding natural Beauty, if principles of sustainable management are followed (Sports Council and Countryside Commission, 1995). This principle was accepted by a House of Commons Environment Select Committee in a report published in the same year (House of Commons, 1995). A Memorandum of Understanding, covering principles for the sustainable use of natural resources for sport and recreation has been agreed by Sport England, the Countryside Agency and the Environment Agency (Sport England et alia, 2000). In addition an Action Plan was also subsequently agreed between the three Agencies to ensure co-operation across a wide range of topics.

The Programmes of DEFRA and Other Agencies

There is a very wide range of changes going on in Government Departments and the Statutory Bodies with a remit for the countryside of relevance to participation in sport and recreation. As important as organisational change, are changes in attitude and the programmes in operation. Only a number of the key changes and programmes are referred to here.

Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

The Rural White Paper (MAFF/DETR, 2000) strongly supports polices of ‘Recreation for All’ in the countryside. MAFF/DETR placed emphasis on three aspects:

- The countryside nearest to towns, including:
  - Revitalising the 250 Country Parks, mainly established some 20 years ago, around towns and cities, so that they can accommodate *inter alia* ‘… the activities and sports that people are now interested in’;
  - Use of NOF Lottery money for programmes on Community Green Spaces and Doorstep Greens on the edges of urban areas; and
  - Adopting the Community Forest approach (local forest partnerships providing for sport and recreation in remodelled urban fringe environments) in a wider range of areas.

- Helping all sectors of the community to enjoy the countryside by:
  - looking to spread the benefits of countryside-based recreation to a greater number of disabled persons, ethnic minorities and the residents of inner city estates;

- encouraging local authorities to give priority to links between town and country, promoting public transport for those seeking to use the countryside for leisure;
- providing more information for those deterred from using the countryside for leisure because of uncertainty over what is available and what might legitimately be used.

- securing an appropriate place for sports and other activities, by:
  - ensuring that opportunities for adventure and sport are offered, so long as they do not interfere unduly with the enjoyment of others and with land management;
  - ensuring that local authorities have adequate powers to deal any resulting problems; and
  - carrying out research into the extent of access to water for sport and recreation and into any problems that exist.

3.3 The study of Access to Water has been published, and DEFRA have commissioned follow up work on access to rivers for canoeists and the use of Voluntary Access Agreements in specific pilot areas (DEFRA, 2002). Other aspects of the work listed in the Rural White Paper have been taken forward by the Countryside Agency (see below).

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

The recently produced planning guidance on *Open Space, Sport and Recreation (2002)* states the importance of sport and recreation to supporting rural renewal, assisting with problems of social inclusion and community cohesion, as well as having a vital role in health and well-being. In rural areas facilities likely to attract significant numbers of participants should be located in or on the edges of country towns. Proposals for farm diversification, it is suggested, should be given favourable consideration (ODPM, 2002).

The Countryside Agency

The widest range of initiatives of relevance to sport and recreation in the countryside are being promoted by the Agency. They are mainly found in their 'Wider Welcome', 'Countryside for Towns and 'Living Landscapes' Branches. Among some of the most important are;

- *Walking the Way to Health Initiative*; with the British Heart Foundation. This scheme aims to get one million people to change from being sedentary to being physically active by using green spaces near where they live as venues for healthy walking schemes; the Countryside Agency have appointed Heath Walks Co-ordinators in each region;

- The *Country Parks Renaissance*; an initiative stemming from the Rural White Paper, to improve the relevance and quality of management in 'honey pot' countryside sites; over 20 per cent of the 250 parks have significant sports use, for example, angling takes place in 54 per cent of parks, horse riding in 46 per cent, and 11 per cent have sports pitches. There is clearly scope for an expansion of these uses according to recent research (Countryside Agency, 2003);

- *Community Forests*; one of the largest environmental improvement and regeneration initiatives in the UK; 12 Forests being established near to major towns and cities; they have a clear remit for sport within a comprehensive vision of remodelled countryside; and there is scope for innovative forms of new provision. In its *Sustainable Communities* plan (2003) the Government is looking for the experience of the Forests to be replicated by the creation of new Forests in further areas in the north and south of the country (ODPM, 2003);

- *Access to Open Country*; the passage of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act will give people access to between 4000-7000 square miles of additional open countryside by 2006. Local Access Forums are charged with preparing Rights of Way Improvement Plans for their local areas;

- *Greenways*; developing a standard for traffic free multi-purpose green routes linking town and country, and piloting their implementation in six areas;

- *Diversity Review*; responding to proposals in the Rural White Paper, a project to explore how a wider cross section of the population can access the countryside. However this is believed to be focussing more on *visiting* the countryside than on engaging in sport and physical activity within it.

A number of other initiatives are mentioned in the section on the urban fringe, found below.

In addition, the Countryside Agency have recently carried out a review of National Park administration and activities, and two new National Parks are being introduced in the South Downs and the New Forest with implications for sport and recreation. The production of management plans for AONBs, and the search for Conservation Board status for others, are also changes where the sports interest requires to be safeguarded and, preferably, enhanced.

The DEFRA review of National Parks confirmed Government support for Circular 12/96 principles that more intensive recreational activities can be accommodated in National Parks. 'Taken as a whole', they state, the Parks 'seem relatively robust environments, capable of absorbing a range of recreational users'. The review recommended research on visitors to National Parks, such a study to be carried out with DCMS involvement (DEFRA, 2002). All of this is good news for sport. But the current position needs to be built on by co-operative activities with other agencies in this area.

English Nature

English Nature has recently consulted on a policy initiative entitled *Reconnecting People and Nature* (English Nature, 2002). Looking to move away from the elitist and scientific culture surrounding much of nature conservation, the Agency wishes to explore connections with other areas of social, environmental and economic policy. Public health and the environment is seen as a priority short term programme. They are seeking to identify key players and appropriate relationships beyond traditional conservation audiences. They wish to develop pilot projects which are innovative and build on others experience.

Two other initiatives are of relevance here;

- The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), English Nature and health professionals have formed a partnership to promote the idea of the *Green Gym*. Participants, referred by doctors, undertake management tasks in nature reserves under supervision. Monitoring of this project by Oxford Brookes University has shown health benefits for those taking part. There are currently 23 green gyms, with a target of 70 by 2006 being set by BTCV. Participant drop-out rate is claimed to be one quarter that for indoor gyms!

- As part of the *Reconnecting People* initiative, English Nature are seeking to improve access to National Nature Reserves (which they largely own), and people's direct involvement in improving Local Nature Reserves; they have also recently commissioned research on sport and recreation in areas of nature conservation value.

Forestry Commission

In 2002 the Forestry Commission carried out an expert consultation on the links between forestry and health and well-being. A number of recommendations were made of relevance to sport and recreation, and the CRN Agencies are currently working on the outline for a further study of these issues (Forestry Commission, 2002).

Community Based Approaches

There are a wide variety of community approaches to increasing the quality of rural environments where sport and recreation takes place. There is a need for an audit of the different local initiatives currently underway. Two examples of national networks able to deliver community participation and management are;

- The *Groundwork Foundation;* a grouping of some 45 local Trusts focussing on community and environmental approaches to regeneration; they operate in rural-urban fringe areas, as well as in deprived areas. They have been successful in developing community approaches to greening, and in mounting projects which increase participation in localities ( );

- The *Development Trusts Association;* this is the umbrella body for a network of some 250 local trusts, one third of which promote rural regeneration. They involve community planning and community involvement in the running of sites used for sport and outdoor recreation. Two relevant examples in a recent study are a regeneration scheme in the Leicestershire Coalfield involving the refurbishment of play areas and sports facilities using developers contributions (Ibstock Community Enterprises) and countryside provision as part of the work of the Rockingham Forest Trust which covers a 200 square mile zone in the Corby-Kettering area (Findlay L et al. 2002).

Sport in the Urban Fringe

The urban fringe, the zone of transition between town and countryside, has long been identified as one of strong potential and suitability for sport and recreation. It acts as;

- A demand area; being the closest countryside to the mass of the urban population, and having a potential for relatively intensive sports use;
- A safety valve area; having space for relocated sport and recreation uses, or those denied space in towns and cities due to urban intensification;
- An access area; where trip lengths to sport sites in the countryside are at their shortest, and are thus most sustainable, and where the opportunities for accessing sport by public transport are greatest; and
- An opportunity area; where under used resources (eg footpaths, canal routes etc) can be used, and where land reclamation can lead to the creation of new sports opportunities as after uses.

The urban fringe has a strong case for priority on social inclusion and health (quality of life) grounds. The following arguments can be made;

- It provides 'doorstep' open air access most likely to be accessed by those without cars, and those from deprived inner city areas;
- There is room for a wide mix of activities, whether related to sport and recreation, nature conservation, forestry or agricultural uses;
- It is most accessible by public transport at lowest cost (Countryside Agency, 1999).

Government support for urban fringe sports provision is found in PPG 17 on *Open Space, Sport and Recreation*. This states that the urban fringe is '…a valuable resource' for sport and recreation, and local authorities should encourage the provision of new facilities. Provision should be '…accessible by walking, cycling and public transport as alternatives to the private car' (ODPM, 2002).

Overall the urban fringe is a natural area for inter-agency co-operation, and a wide range of initiatives have, with varying degrees of success, been implemented. In addition to measures such as country parks and Community Forests, referred to above, we have seen:

- Countryside management services; valuable for ensuring local footpath and other access;
- Millennium and Doorstep Greens (Countryside Agency);
- Community Green Spaces Programme (Sport England);
- The Sustrans National Cycleway; over 4000 miles of which are in England, and its local links.

The Countryside Agency and the Groundwork Foundation have embarked during 2003 on an extensive programme of research and policy work to develop a National Urban Fringe Initiative. The aim is to create a new vision for the urban fringe, and to seek funding from the Government in the 2004 expenditure round for its implementation. They have commissioned a wide range of research to assess the effectiveness of a range of mechanisms in delivering aspects of the vision. A large-scale project is looking at the effectiveness of a range of mechanisms for delivering aspects of the vision. The Agency is working towards *Urban Fringe Action Plans.* These would form local development documents (part of what will replace development plans), if the Planning Bill is approved.

A brief project commissioned in January 2003 is looking at *The State and Potential of Sport and Recreation in the Urban Fringe.* The work aims to give an evidence based assessment of;

- The current state and significance of sport and recreation in the urban fringe;
- The potential and scope to create more opportunities for sport and recreation; and
- Producing a brief assessment of what the findings imply for a new vision for the urban fringe.

It is indicative of the ground that is needed to be made up in this area, that Sport England were not involved in devising and commissioning this work.

One of the best examples of what can be done for sport can be found in Community Forest areas. The Tees Forest has recently revised its Forest Plan, and this gives a flavour of what should be achieved. The aim is to provide enhanced access to land, air and water facilities for recreation and ensure adequate support mechanisms to encourage and enable people to use these facilities. The following are some of the key measures;

- Identifying opportunities and preparing Action Plans for the development of specific sites and routes for sport and recreation;

- Providing local *Gateway Sites* on the urban fringe, easily accessible to everyone, in addition to major Gateway sites;

- Developing a strategic network of trails for walking, cycling, and horse riding, based on linking together Gateway sites to create sustainable recreation corridors;

- Enabling access to land and water on a permanent basis, as well as on an informal temporary basis, for sports with specific requirements such as cross country running, orienteering, climbing, canoeing, archery and motor sports (Tees Forest, 2000)

The Forest Partnership is looking for agencies such as Sport England to take a lead in developing such programmes. Community Forests are an important, high profile, opportunity for Sport England. A fuller account of these proposals is found in Annex A.

Sport in the Countryside and the Socially Excluded

Some 28 per cent of the population live in rural areas. The rural population is growing three times faster than that in urban areas, and is expected to continue to do so. In remoter rural areas, with low economic potential, young adults are leaving the countryside. In most areas there has been an influx of the relatively well-off, and pattern of the migration of jobs out of cities and large towns is now well established (Champion et alia, 1998).

Rural populations are older, better off than the average, and have more retired people (Countryside Agency, 2002). Within rural areas, however, a veneer of relative wealth and high mobility obscures significant areas and pockets of economic disadvantage (Cabinet Office, 2000). Low income households cluster in Counties such as Cornwall, Devon, Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Herefordshire and Shropshire with often 30 per cent of households in individual wards having incomes 60 per cent or less than the national median.

Little is known of how far the sport and recreation needs of rural residents differ from their urban counterparts. Problems of social exclusion are compounded by lack of mobility for some, and poor access to services, and sport and recreation facilities. We can distinguish a ‘mobile majority’, taking advantage of local access to the countryside, and who travel to use facilities in rural market towns and service centres. On the other hand there can be significant problems of access for women, young people and the elderly who lack access to facilities. The impression is of poor levels of personal motivation, compounded by sub-standard facilities, and a lack of funds for upgrading recreation grounds or other forms of local provision.

This wide topic requires a fuller audit of the existing situation than can be given in this paper. The Regional Development Agencies, for example, have programmes in place for the retention and enhancement of rural services and rural regeneration more generally. Four aspects are referred to here;

- planning policies in rural areas are, over the next 20 years, likely to result in the accretion of new development around rural service centres and market towns. We need to know more about what is a desirable mix of facilities and other measures to promote active lifestyles across the social spectrum, and focussed on such rural centres. The East Midlands RDA has developed a checklist of appropriate facilities for rural centres, which may provide a starting point;

- the Countryside Agency has a programme to assist the community based regeneration of market towns, focussing on areas where services are under threat. In each case a local ‘health check’ is undertaken to isolate needs and deficiencies. This is a programme where Sport England involvement could be very useful;

- in more sparsely populated rural areas, projects to make mobile provision, taking sports equipment from village to village, have been attempted; the need is learn lessons from existing schemes so that new innovative proposals can be put forward; this would fit well with proposals in *Game Plan*;

- at a personal level participation in rural areas can be affected by lack of transport. In some areas 'Wheels to Work' projects have been instigated. These involve leasing mopeds to young persons so that they can access work opportunities. The potential of adding access to sport to the aims of such schemes should be assessed.

Developers Contributions

As in urban areas, developers contributions for sport and recreation can be an important impetus for change. Financial contributions taken from new housing can allow for the upgrading of existing facilities which will be used by persons across the social and economic spectrum in rural areas. This is an area in which Sport England have been involved. A *Good Practice Guide* was produced in 2001, and a *Joint Pilot Project* is being undertaken with South Hams District in order to develop Supplementary Planning Guidance (Elson, 2001). A number of dissemination seminars have also been held across the South West Region.

The importance of this method of implementation should not be under estimated. In Winchester District, Hampshire well over £1.5 million has been collected for village level sport and recreation over the last 10 years. Other areas with effective schemes include Fenland District, Suffolk Coastal District and North Dorset District. If one third of new housing development takes place in rural areas, even at present low building rates, this could involve 50,000 dwellings per year. If each contributed £1000 towards sport and recreation provision this could yield £50 million per year for sport and recreation development in rural areas.

The Future

Sport and recreation in the countryside is capable of delivering a number of the objectives of *Game Plan*. Three particular themes should be stressed. These are:

- sport and health;
- sport and social inclusion, and
- sport and sustainable development.

Each of the suggestions below have strengths in one or more of the above areas;

- ***green exercise****;* this would involve developing innovative programmes to link health, well-being and the natural environment more explicitly with sport and recreation. It would lead to greatly increased participation levels, but not necessarily targeted at deprived sectors of the community. Partnership working with the Countryside Agency, the Forestry Commission, and community health agencies would be involved. Specific actions could include:
  - adding jogging, power walking or other activities to healthy walks schemes;
  - building on the current programme of improving school sports grounds under the Community Greenspace Programme;
  - encouraging school sports co-ordinators to use greenspace for physical activity;
  - developing innovative schemes for the use of local woodlands;
  - co-operating on the joint Agencies study on this topic being developed through the Countryside Recreation Network.

- ***urban fringe sport and recreation***; a focus on the urban fringe would score heavily on the social inclusion and sustainability agendas. It would also potentially deliver high levels of additional participation. A Sport England urban fringe initiative should be mounted under a theme such as 'Gateway to Sport', which promoted and provided activities near to where people live. Possible actions could include:
  - developing prime gateway sites in urban fringe or Community Forest locations;
  - creating innovative forms of management of active sports in a selected number of country parks;
  - piloting the role of information in delivering existing opportunities;
  - assessment of the take up of opportunities by disadvantaged groups and how this could be improved;
  - assessing the value of planning obligations in delivering sport and recreation in the urban fringe; and

- working with the Countryside Agency and Groundwork to maximise the sports benefits from their urban fringe initiative.

- ***Innovative help for rural communities***; this would score highest on the social inclusion agenda, but in terms of numerical increases in participation would be lower than the other suggestions. This would involve devising and piloting a range of innovative ways to improve the quality of life of deprived rural residents. Possible actions could include:
  - Audit of existing schemes being operated by County Sports Partnerships;
  - Use of Countryside Agency rural transport funds to mount innovative 'Wheels to Leisure' schemes;
  - Development and evaluation of a range of mobile facility schemes;
  - Developing links with the regional development agencies to maximise the benefits of joint programmes for rural renewal through market town improvement programmes.

- ***Increasing sports participation in the designated countryside***; this would score highly in terms of sustainable development and has the potential to deliver significant increases in participation given the levels of visits to National Parks and the coast. Specific actions could include;
  - Establish principles for sport and recreation provision in National Parks and AONBs;
  - Mount demonstration schemes showing how more intensive forms of recreation can be fitted into the scene. Partners here would be the National Park Authorities and the Countryside Agency;
  - Organise and monitor demonstration schemes for sports such as mountain biking, horse riding, and orienteering in designated areas;
  - Work with English Nature to show how increased access for active recreation can be reconciled with conservation management on National Nature Reserves and similar designated areas;
  - Define sites of regional importance for sport that should be protected by the planning system.

- ***Paying for sport through developers contributions***; this is a cross-cutting issue which would assist in the delivery of all of the three themes. Given the urban bias of recent planning policy advice for sport it would be necessary for local authorities to be clear on their local requirements for open space before requests could legitimately be made to developers. Specific actions might include;
  - 'adopting' two or three rural local authorities in each Region and providing them with consultant help to devise Supplementary Planning Guidance;
  - working out and publishing more detail on the costs of facilities such as cycleways, walking or riding routes and other sports infrastructure in the natural environment;
  - publicising the results of successful schemes so that their principles may be emulated elsewhere.

Some Basic Choices?

If Sport England are seeking to maximise participation, they should go for the 'soft' targets, these would be A and B social groups who would take part in large numbers in healthy walking schemes and the like. Focussing on disadvantaged groups would score strongly on social exclusion criteria, but might not be numerically strong in participation terms.

Many of the actions here involve co-operation with others, for example the Countryside Agency or Forestry Commission. Such partnerships are valuable and should be encouraged. But, at the same time, Sport England should be identifying the sport component of any scheme they enter closely so that the value they are adding can be assessed. This brings forward a wider lesson. ***Sport England should be generating their own ideas*** in the area of countryside and sport. If properly packaged and presented they will be picked up by Civil Servants and used in documents such as White Papers. Rather than reacting to the agendas set by others, there is a need to be setting the agenda far more.

Many of the proposals here relate to 'recreations', such as walking and cycling and not to organised sport. Moving the focus in this way will require a degree of 'culture change' in Sport England. Perhaps we are moving away from the sports hall and the treadmill, and a preoccupation with saving playing fields used by a minority of the population, to the healthy use of green space by the person in the street? A new interpretation of community sport?

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Annex A: Sport in Community Forests

[Extract from Tees Forest Plan – 2000, pages 27-28]

'Approach
Almost all sport pursuits and many leisure activities can and do take place in the countryside. In 1992 the Sports Council produced a policy document 'A Countryside for Sport' which advocated:

- a strategic approach to countryside sport be adopted by all those planning for sport and recreation
- everyone should have the opportunity to take part and develop their competence in countryside sports, whatever the level
- the use of the countryside for sport and recreation should be sustainable by ensuring that the environment is safeguarded against inappropriate or excessive use by appropriate management and co-operation with users
- the sustainable development of sport and recreation in the countryside should be based on the statutory land use planning system'.

'The vision for the Tees Forest is that the development of the Forest will result in opportunities to provide a greater range of countryside sport and recreation pursuits in attractive wooded surroundings within easy reach of everyone living in the Lower Tees Valley. Local residents should be able to try out and develop their skills at Gateway sites adjoining urban areas, which provide access to a strengthened network of trails for walking, riding and cycling. Additional sport facilities for the full range of activities for land, air and water will be encouraged within the Forest, where compatible with Countryside For Sport guidelines.

The Tees Forest Partners will encourage recreational participants, top class performers and spectators to take advantage of the facilities made available in designated and appropriate areas. This encouragement will be achieved through initiatives aimed at providing better information, linking public transport with leisure and affording opportunities to those who are currently inhibited from making full use of the countryside for their recreation. This approach is consistent with Sport England's Policy Action Team for Sport and the Arts recommendations from the Social Exclusion Unit.

The aim is to provide appropriate access to land, air and water facilities for recreation and to ensure adequate support mechanisms to encourage and enable people to use these facilities. This may be achieved by developing new provision and reinforcing existing provision by;

- identifying opportunities and preparing Action Plans for the development of specific sites and routes for sport and recreation;
- providing local Gateway sites on the urban fringe, easily accessible to everyone in addition to major Gateway sites;
- developing a strategic network of trails for walking, cycling and horse riding, based on linking together Gateway sites to create sustainable recreation corridors;
- enabling access to land and water on a permanent basis as well as a n informal temporary basis for sports with specific requirements such as cross country running, orienteering, climbing, canoeing, archery or motor sports.

It is also intended to provide opportunities for all and facilitate active participation by:
- working with partner organisations and user groups to provide appealing events and activities in the Forest, targeted at local participants
- the production and distribution of information on existing and new opportunities
- supporting local community groups in organising their own activities in the Forest
- ensuring coach/leader education is available
- working with partners to target specific groups including women, ethnic minorities, young and disabled people and those on low incomes
- seeking to involve those who are currently excluded due to social or economic circumstances.

Delivery of objectives will be through stakeholders with the Forest Team acting as enablers of change by forming partnerships, targeting new and existing resources and shaping the strategic direction'

'The Tees Forest Partnership will pursue proposals that;

- realise the objectives set out in the Forest Vision in respect of facilities and participation

- seek partnerships with agencies concerned with Sport and Health promotion such as |Government Agencies, governing bodies of sport and health services
- secure and deploy resources to achieve sport and health promotion
- maintain and update a Countryside Sport and Recreation Strategy and Action Plan
- create Gateway sites and Greenway routes and local access opportunities'

Sport and Local Delivery

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Introduction

Local authorities have historically been the major investors in sporting infrastructure in England. This activity has been promulgated on the basis of perceived allocational imperfections in market mechanisms (Bramham and Henry, 1985; Gratton and Taylor, 1985). However, it has been argued that major policy initiatives, such as Sport for All (McIntosh and Charlton, 1985), have had a focus well beyond facility provision (Ravenscroft, 1991). In part as a recognition of this overly narrow agenda, there has been an increasing divergence in local authorities, between policy generation and actual delivery (Ravenscroft, 1998). Under this new structural arrangement (Glover and Burton, 1998; Ravenscroft, 1998), local authorities have increasingly become enablers (Henry, 2001), while a mix of direct labour organisations, trusts and commercial companies have assumed the delivery role.

However, particularly in the case of the commercial operators, it is questionable whether this any more constitutes 'local delivery', and whether it continues to address the barriers to participation faced by economically and socially disadvantaged groups. Indeed, as Game Plan makes clear, 'grassroots' participation remains a core concern for Government, particularly in terms of failures in provision (see Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002). In the apparent vacuum created by the devolution of local authority activities, other local institutions (such as schools, regeneration partnerships, county sports partnerships and professional sports clubs) have become increasingly influential in the localised delivery of sports programmes. As such, sports development is now a core activity across a broad range of local services (Centre for Leisure and Sport Research, 2002).

In developing this argument, the paper will commence by examining the changing political constructs of participation and the consequent ways in which local authorities have sought to encourage people into active sport. The paper considers these initiatives in the light of CCT and BV, before considering the potential options for developing local delivery in the future.

Driving Up Participation

'Participation' has been a cornerstone of public interventions in the last 60 years, since the introduction of the Welfare State (Dunleavy, 1980; Clarke, 1992). Indeed, at some level, raising (driving up) participation has been an enduring concern of the state, at all levels. In the main, most activity has been addressed at providing access to facilities and services for those who have been excluded from the market and other – largely voluntary – providers (Ravenscroft, 1991). More recently, certainly since the Thatcher Governments of the 1980s, participation has been increasingly associated with the affirmation of 'active citizenship', expressed through activity in the public realm (Ravenscroft, 1993, 1996; Sport England, 2000). This has been further refined under the Blair administration, towards the legitimation of new forms of participative and deliberative governance (Leach and Wingfield, 2000; Ravenscroft, Curry and Markwell, 2002).

For Government, the new agenda for delivering its sport and physical activity objectives has two main dimensions:

- encouraging a major increase in participation in sport and physical activity, primarily on the grounds of health benefits: and
- achieving a sustainable increase in success in international competition, primarily because of the general 'feelgood' factor associated with winning.
  (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002)

While reflecting changing social and political ideologies, this shift has had a fundamental impact on how we understand participation and what it means to participate, in the political, cultural and economic arenas of society. Thus, for example, the early emphasis on participation was constructed broadly around a welfare rights agenda in which equality was served by ensuring access for all people. The later, Thatcherite, agenda was a reconstruction of rights, away from the former universalism, towards a more overtly commodified and consumerist model, in which 'successful'

citizens could demonstrate their success through participation (Henry, 1993; Ravenscroft, 1993). Most recently, participation has been linked to social responsibility, such that we have a duty to participate in the public sphere, to underpin democracy, to maintain our health and to increase the overall stock of social capital in the economy (Ravenscroft, 1998; Puttnam, 2000; Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002).

In each case, public interventions have been (or should have been) premised on overcoming the barriers that prevent participation (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002). Recreational constraints literature suggests that there are three types of barrier – or constraint – to be addressed (see Figure 1). As the Figure suggests, constraints exist at three levels (personal; interpersonal; and societal), with each informing the others although requiring individual solutions.

Figure 1 Constraints to Participation in Outdoor Recreation

Intrapersonal constraints: these are individual psychological states and attributes that interact with leisure preferences rather than intervening between preferences and participation. They include stress, depression, anxiety, reference group attitudes, perceived skill levels and subjective evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities.

Interpersonal constraints: these result from interpersonal interactions or the relationship between individuals' characteristics. Constraints of this sort may interact with both preference for and subsequent participation in group leisure activities. For example, a person may experience an interpersonal constraint if they are unable to locate a suitable partner with whom to engage in a particular activity.

Structural barriers: in a similar definition to Henderson et al (1988), these are intervening factors between leisure preferences and participation. These could be issues of family commitment, financial resources, season and climate, work commitments, the availabiltiy and knowledge of leisure opportunities and reference group attitudes to the appropriateness of some activities.

Source: Searle and Jackson (1985); Crawford and Godbey (1987); Henderson, et al (1988); Jackson (1988, 1993); Crawford, et al (1991); Kay and Jackson (1991); Jackson, et al (1993); Jackson and Scott (1999); Curry and Ravenscroft (2001); Shogan (2002); Ravenscroft (2003)

This suggests that local delivery has been very much about the intersection between two complimentary agendas: the changing motives for public interventions; and understandings of the types of constraints that have prevented participation. This was very much at the forefront of early policy (Wolfenden, 1960; Department of the Environment, 1977; McIntosh and Charlton, 1985) and has remained crucial in the recent Game Plan strategy (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002). In terms of framing local delivery, this dual agenda has generally been tackled from two perspectives simultaneously (Coalter, et al, 1986):

- the provision of buildings and fixed equipment (addressing structural constraints); and
- sports development and leisure/sport management, directly and through education (addressing all three types of constraint)

Local Delivery of Facilities and Infrastructure

For the last century or so, local authorities & parish councils have provided the bulk of sports facilities – especially recreation grounds, school playing fields, swimming pools, leisure centres, village halls (Wolfenden, 1960; Coalter, et al, 1986; Ravenscroft, 1992). They have also played an important role in securing recreational access to rights of way and water resources (Centre for Leisure Research, 1986; Sports Council, 1991, 1992-6; University of Brighton Consortium, 2001). This infrastructure emphasis has been particularly prevalent over the last 60 years, on the explicit grounds that the primary barrier to participation has been structural: a lack of suitable buildings and fixed equipment to facilitate participation (Sports Council, 1972; John and Campbell, 1995, 1996). Data collected by the Henley Centre (2003) suggest that this building programme has achieved just over 600 public sports and leisure centres in England. However, less than 50 have been built in the last 10 years, while more than half of the stock is at least 20 years old.

In addition to an extensive building programme, for much of this time, local authorities have also subsidised entry or access to their facilities, either uniformly, or according to criteria such as unemployment or age (Coalter, et al, 1986; Coalter, 1995). This was particularly the case in the period 1970s to early 1990s, when local authorities went much further, developing large integrated leisure departments, large facility provision programmes and encouraging dual use of school and other community facilities (Gratton and Taylor, 1991; Hoggett, 1991; Department of the Environment, 1992; White, 1992; Henry, 1993). At this time, the local delivery of leisure was widely claimed to be part of the Welfare State (Ravenscroft, 1996), was largely free at the point of delivery, was targeted at the poorer and under-represented sectors of society and, crucially, was inextricably linked with the public sector (White, 1992).

Although it has been argued that public provision for sport and recreation did not suffer the funding cuts inflicted by the Thatcher administrations on other parts of the Welfare State, it is certainly apparent that unanswered questions have been asked about the impact of local delivery during this period (Coalter, 1998; Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002). What is certainly apparent is that Thatcher's policies for local government led directly to the break-up of the integrated leisure departments, as authorities established the client/contractor split required by CCT (Coalter, 1995; Knox and Young, 1995; Collins, 1997; Ravenscroft, 1998). Indeed, rather than build on the previous progress, CCT contributed to the commercialisation of local authority service delivery and an inevitable division and diminution of the quality and volume of leisure services and service providers (Leisure Futures Ltd, 1993; Nichols and Taylor, 1995; Torkildsen, 1998; Henry, 2001). It also, for the most part, caused a halt in the construction and even planned maintenance of public sport and leisure facilities.

In the place of the large leisure departments came small strategic client-side units, housed increasingly in the Environment, Planning or Community Services Departments of local government, and charged with agendas far removed from the former welfarist concerns (Stewart and Walsh, 1992; Audit Commission, 1993; Stoker, 1993). In some cases, these departments now report to new cabinet-style local government, rather than the old committee structure (DETR, 1998). Many of these units no longer employ leisure professionals, but instead rely public sector managers and technocrats (Ravenscroft, 1998), who are skilled in negotiating and monitoring legal arrangements with contractors (Gyford, 1993). While local authorities continued, in most cases, to own their capital stock, this new approach to local delivery has tended to place less emphasis on the provision for sport per se, and more on achieving broader social goals typically related to health, crime and inclusion (Robbie and Wright, 1996; Henry, 2001; Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002).

In contrast to the client side, the contractor organisations have tended to grow in size, from devolved labour organisations and trusts running single contracts, to increasingly large leisure management companies with a number of contracts (Robbie and Wright, 1996; Ravenscroft, 1998; Ravenscroft, Hayes, et al, 2002). At their biggest – Leisure Connection and DC Leisure for example – the companies are now larger than many of the leisure service departments that they replaced, and have a more highly defined and differentiated business strategy and structure than was ever previously the case. For example, Leisure Connection now has 50 contracts covering 120 facilities (Leisure Connection, 2003), while DC Leisure Management Ltd employs 6,000 people in over 90 facilities operated for nearly 30 local authorities (DC Leisure, 2003).

This schism between client and contractor has been further exacerbated by Best Value (BV), with the management companies gaining ever more freedom to develop their own approach to service delivery, benchmarked against performance in other facilities that they operate. There is as yet little evidence of the types of contracts being used, although there appears to be a number of distinct models:

- establishment of Industrial and Provident Society trusts operated by commercial companies on a fixed-fee basis;
- externalisation of operation with management by wholly-owned subsidiaries of the local authorities (often the former Direct Labour Organisations) or a leisure management company;
- joint ventures – BV partnership arrangements between client and contractor;
- major design, build and management projects funded through PFI/PPP routes.

(Leisure Connection, 2003)

In addition, the larger leisure management companies are developing their own career structures, training programmes and new corporate approaches to marketing and promotion. Many of these companies also run their own enterprises, often health and fitness clubs, thus developing 'local delivery' into a determinedly mixed economy (Coalter, 1990), in which the pursuit of commercial profits is no longer seen as antithetical to community goals (DC Leisure, 2003).

However, while there is new investment in the enterprises that the management companies own, neither management companies nor local authorities have been investing very much at all (although Leisure Connection claims to have invested £20m in local authority facilities in the last 8 years). This is seen by Government as a key barrier to participation in 'grassroots' sports and physical activity (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002). However, there is as yet little sign of new public money to address this. Rather, through schemes such as PFI and PPP, local delivery is increasingly in the hands of the commercial management companies. The first PFI scheme in leisure management opened early in 2003, when Waterfront Leisure, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) established by Parkwood Leisure and Sefton Council, opened the £8.5m Crosby Leisure Centre, containing many conventional features of a public sports centre plus 'Expressions', a commercial health and fitness suite (Parkwood Holdings, 2003).

Parkwood Leisure is now seeking to sign a £30m PFI contract with Bexley Council, to upgrade its leisure facilities. Parkwood Holdings (the parent company) is also developing PFI projects in healthcare, education and the MOD. While there is little further activity in PFI-related leisure development yet, it is apparent that other companies, notably DC Leisure, feel that there are opportunities to exploit these schemes. Accordingly, DC Leisure Developments Ltd has been launched with £1m capital, to attract local authorities with inclusive PFI/PPP contracts covering funding, design and build, maintenance and operation (DC Leisure, 2003). Although it is hard to estimate the impact of private finance in the public sector, recent work for the GMB (Labour Research Department, 2001) suggests that, for the county of Lincolnshire, the private sector earns about £46m annually from public service and PFI contracts.

Sports Development and Leisure/Sport Management

In addition to addressing perceived structural constraints, emphasis has also been placed on encouraging people to overcome their intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints. This was first formally initiated under the Physical Education Act 1944, on the grounds of fostering health improvements, and was extended in the Wolfenden Report (1960). This approach has remained very much in evidence since that time, with various claims made about the wider benefits of provision for sport and physical activity. These include its impact on delinquency (Scarman, 1981); urban regeneration (Department of the Environment, 1977; Coalter, et al, 2000); unemployment (Glyptis, et al, 1986); and social inclusion (Centre for Leisure and Sport Research, 2002).

While the development of PE teaching in schools may have been advancing, and with it the embryonic emergence of sports development (Keech, 2003), it was throughout the 1970s and 1980s that local government was instrumental in developing the leisure/sports management professions. This was both in terms of their technical abilities and in terms of local political and strategic agendas (Hoggett, 1991; Houlihan, 1991; Gyford, 1993; Shaw, et al, 1995; Ravenscroft and Tolley, 1996; Ravenscroft, 1998; Henry, 2001). Where once the professions were dominated by PE teachers and ex-service personnel, local authorities provided employment and suitable training for a new generation of quasi-professionals, with an emergent career path through the big integrated leisure departments and an agenda to deliver local social benefits through sport and recreation.

However, this agenda failed largely to withstand the questions asked of it by the early Thatcher administrations and the break-up of the big leisure departments. This led directly to the loss of mid-level management jobs in local authorities, the fragmentation of the sector labour markets and the marginalisation of sports development (SPRITO, 2001; Keech, 2003; Ravenscroft, Hayes, et al, 2002). While large companies grew in the contractor arena, the client side became ever more strategic, setting contractual agendas that were bound, eventually, to undermine the localised relationship between an authority and its citizens.

Some leisure management companies and contractors claimed initially to have safeguarded sports development jobs as part of their delivery mechanism (Ravenscroft and Tolley, 1996). Others,

particularly those in large cities with a strong client base, are still able to do so. However, especially in smaller provincial towns, it is apparent that such commitments have become victim to a mix a cost-cutting and take-overs in the late 1990s. Rather than sports development, the commercial leisure management companies have been seeking to expand in to the new and lucrative health and exercise markets, catering at a personal level for clients who can afford to pay. While mainly related to their market activity, this approach has seeped through into public leisure facilities, with an increasing emphasis on value-added activities, such as events, parties, shows and hosting professional and semi-professional sport.

Sports development within local authorities has thus become increasingly marginalized, both structurally (as a result of CCT and BV) and culturally, as the agenda has moved from sports development per se to a broader community development perspective (Sport England, 2000). Notwithstanding recent Sport England initiatives (Sport England, 2001), Keech (2003) suggests that it is 'highly debatable' whether sports development officers have ever seen community development as part of their role. Similarly, Nichols (Nichols, 1997, 1999; Nichols and Booth, 2000) has similarly questioned the extent to which sports development can impact on other policy areas, such as youth crime prevention.

Pluralism in Local Delivery

While traditionally being the major supplier of infrastructure for the local delivery of sport, therefore, local authorities have not, certainly recently, actually 'delivered' the bulk of the sporting activity. Granted, some delivery has been through local authority sports development units, while most sports centres and swimming pools have also catered for individuals and families. Yet, in the main, local authorities have been enablers, providing facilities that others use to delivery sport and physical activity. In addition, this enabling role has been very much supply led, with very little interest in, nor appreciation of, demand and need (Mercer, 1973; Coalter, et al, 1986; Curry and Ravenscroft, 2001). The consequence of this has been that those already active in sport and recreation have been enabled to do more at highly subsidised prices (Coalter, 1998). This is the economic inefficiency highlighted by Gratton and Taylor (1975; 1981), in which crude price subsidies have tended to displace initiatives that may be of more benefit in overcoming barriers. These initiatives include better information, training, equipment and access to facilities (University of Brighton Consortium, 2001), while Game Plan suggests the need for more and better coaches and more appropriate facilities (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002).

These issues have been, in many towns and cities, exacerbated by the impacts of CCT and BV, which have encouraged an increasingly generic approach to delivery that is neither local nor overtly constraints-driven. Indeed, the large leisure management companies have made career development a virtue, involving frequent movement of personnel and an increasingly centralised approach to training and development. Equally, the sport and recreation labour market continues to be characterised by retention problems, such that there is little consistency and skill development in sport delivery (Ravenscroft, Hayes, et al, 2002). Equally, companies such as DC Leisure now offer benchmarking services that measure their performance at one centre against their performance at other similar facilities that they operate (DC Leisure, 2003).

As a result it can be argued that the public sector, as facility provider and service regulator, is no longer involved in 'local delivery' in the sense of its original remit and operational strategy. This is further compounded by the increasing social and political distance between local government and local people (DETR, 1998; Leach and Wingfield, 2000). While Cabinet government at the local level may lead to improved services, there are concerns that it marginalises both the public and backbench politicians, as evidenced by the continuing decline in electoral democracy and the failure of deliberation to become established in its stead (Thompson and Hoggett, 2001). To compound this, it is apparent that sport is a minor feature of the local government Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPAs), while very few local Public Service Agreements (PSAs) have targets for sport (Appleton, 2003, suggests that only two councils in south east England have sport-related PSAs).

For Coalter (1998), this has amounted to a failure of the political left to develop robust understandings of the value of subsidised sports provision – and a concomitant failure to communicate this value to either the users (and non-users) or the politicians. For others, it is much more closely associated with a failure to appreciate the nature and impact of the constraints to participation. In particular, a number

of surveys have suggested that some people are simply not interested in participating in sport or physical activity (Curry and Ravenscroft, 2001; Rowe, et al, 2003). For these people, the constraints are largely intrapersonal, and no amount of emphasis on removing structural barriers will help at all. Beyond this, some studies have indicated that perceptions of fitness and athleticism prevent some people from participation (Nottingham City Council, 2000), while others increasingly require companions if they are to undertake activities outside the home (Ravenscroft, 2003).

The Future for Local Delivery

Policy Drift

Local authorities remain the principal providers of local facilities, even if these are ageing and increasingly irrelevant to contemporary requirements (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002). However, the actual delivery is shifting away from local leisure services, primarily towards local social and education services, aided by the voluntary sector and governing bodies of sport, and agencies of central and regional government (Sport England's Running Sport programme, for example). A number of studies indicate that the key to participation is making the routes into sport more accessible (University of Brighton Consortium, 2001). This used to be a prime function of school sports, backed by parents who had probably benefited from the same educational system (Keech, 2003). Thus, especially in the more expensive and exclusive sports, participation has been largely a function of parenting and schooling. But both these access routes have been in decline: schools have been doing less sport and have fewer sporting facilities (Henley Centre, 2003), while the fracturing of families has also occurred (Kay, 2003).

Few local authority leisure services have sought actively to address this, through encouraging new entrants, or new activities, or new locations, or new approaches to delivery. This is exacerbated by the inflexibility of the contractual relationship between client and contractor still evident in many authorities. Indeed, under new PFI and PPP arrangements in education, it is often the case that 'public' facilities are not available to the public at the very times that they are required.

In contrast to the growing disjuncture between local policy and local provision for sport and physical activity, schools have contributed significantly to local delivery, by providing equipment and training, in addition to facilities (Sports Council, 1994a, 1994b; Sport England, 1997). The importance of schools extends beyond bringing young people into sport, to include addressing and reinforcing broader social values. However, the impact of school has often been lost, as young people fail to continue their sporting activities post school (GHS, 1987, 1993, 1996; Rowe, et al, 2004).

Recent initiatives, particularly Specialist Sports Colleges (SSCs) and School Sports Co-ordinators (SSCOs), reflect a new commitment by Government to increase participation by young people. This is particularly with respect to increasing their 'sports literacy' sufficiently that they will remain active even after they have left school (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002; Keech, 2003).

As the Government has made clear, it is no longer the local authority, nor the LEA, but the school that is at the heart of local community life (DCMS 2000). As such, schools are increasingly being seen as the 'hubs' around which community life is organised. In some cases – Eastbourne for example – this is being developed actively through sport, with the development of a sports park shared between schools, colleges, the local authority and local people. With its team of SDOs and SSCOs, such developments have the potential to become a community focus, encouraging young people into sport and providing ways for them and their families to remain club members even when they are no longer at the school or college. This might be thought of as the 'mall' approach to local sports delivery, in which a range of activities and opportunities is made available at one site, for all the family (Friedberg, 1993). It also has many similarities with the continental family-oriented sports and community clubs that appear to be fundamental in underpinning continued participation in sport (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2002).

New Approaches to Sports Development

Rather than the conventional technocratic approach to skills training to support this, the new emphasis, certainly at a regional and sub-regional level, is to mentor key local actors and facilitators, especially sports coaches. These may be paid or voluntary. This is increasingly underpinned by the work of localised bodies such as the county sports partnerships, where coach training and mentoring initiatives are being developed to encourage and maintain participation (Sport England, 1999).

This is encouraged by central and regional government funding, where the emphasis is on a strategic, nationally regulated, focus away from a structural to an interpersonal approach to negotiating barriers to access. Within this framework, delivery is a the micro-local level, working with small groups of coaches able to encourage new people into sport (or keep the current ones motivated), as well as developing the quality of club administration to ensure that people can gain entry to the world of sport (Sport England, 1999). However, as the Henley Centre (2003) has cautioned, 'professionalisation' could lead to a reduction in the number of people prepared to volunteer for such roles.

Links between sports development and education are also being promulgated at the micro-local level, often through professional sports clubs. At this level, skilling in sport is increasingly being combined with skilling through sport to aid community development, education and social inclusion. At the national level, the 'Playing for Success' (PfS) scheme has been popular with pupils, parents and teachers, and has recently been extended to teams in lower divisions and outside of football (DfES, 2003). Where this type of funding has not been available, local sources such as county Learning and Skills Councils and Regional Development Agencies have been active in supporting the extension work of local professional and semi-professional sports clubs. These types of initiatives reinforce a dual message: that all people need (and have a personal responsibility) to develop their education and skills; and that it is possible to do this through sport.

Much of this activity still relies predominantly on local public facilities. Yet, many of these facilities are increasingly inadequate for the uses to which they are being put, while PFI and other schemes can limit access at peak times. Equally, while commercial leisure management companies seem increasingly keen to develop leisure facilities for the 'public sector', there is little evidence of most professional sport receiving similar support.

New Social Practices

It seems to be increasingly accepted that people are becoming more reluctant to join clubs and societies. In their work on water sports, the University of Brighton Consortium (2001) found that this reluctance is related to a number of factors, most prominently a wish for flexibility and a growing antipathy to making long term (and often costly) commitments to specific clubs (and sports). This is consistent with Puttnam's (2000) thesis about people moving away from formal participation via clubs, societies and leagues, to casual individualism. This is witnessed by the growth in day ticket and non-member access and the declining voluntary input to clubs and societies (Taylor, 2003). This reflects a broad commodification of sport, away from the public and towards the commercial sector. This is exacerbated by the increasingly commercial remit of the big leisure management companies and the growing pluralism of public policy at the local level.

Conclusions

The processes and policies identified in this paper must lead to a fundamental questioning of the future public provision of large-scale sport and leisure centres. Where once these were important civic buildings, they are increasingly icons of the growing commodification of the localised delivery of sport. While it may be that schools will take on much of the social role of local authorities, certainly in terms of facility and sports development, it must be questioned how far this is suitable for all members of a community. What about those who do not have children, or do not live in conventional family relationships? Will they have access to school facilities? Will they want to have access? What issues does this raise about safety and child protection?

The danger is that new forms of tiered opportunity emerge which are based on tenuous assumptions about social mobility and inclusivity. School sports facilities may be suitable and accessible for young people and their families while those young people are actually attending the school. With appropriate support from Government, some school-based facilities may form the basis for sports clubs of the type found in continental Europe. In other cases, multi-use sports parks may develop into a sporting equivalent of the shopping mall and multiplex cinema (Chaney, 1994). But this approach will surely not be suitable for all people, especially when they do not have families, are in a labile job market, or are excluded from conventional society.

For these people – and others – access to local public facilities may be increasingly mediated by a commercial management sector driven by performance targets rather than genuinely social goals. While, in the past, local authority leisure centres provided this focus, the future assumption must be

that the drift from school will be into either the commercial sector (especially for health and fitness activities) or the voluntary sector which, in the growing absence of public facility provision, will itself have increasingly to engage with the commercial sector in order to establish access to facilities. Failing this, the drift will be out of sport altogether.

What is certainly apparent is that local authorities are faced with addressing an ever more disparate policy and operational community, particularly if they wish to re-establish their claim to be local deliverers. In particular, it is clear that the education and health agendas are important to Government, and must be reflected at local level. In addition, although not expanding significantly, the voluntary sector in sport remains highly important and requires continual nurturing at 'grassroots' level, as identified in Game Plan. However, without substantial public funds to devote to provision, many local authorities will have to consider PFI and other funding routes if they wish to maintain their role as facilitators and enablers. Yet, this route carries significant dangers, in that the public sector may once again be locked into paying for large leisure centres that do little for the everyday fitness needs of ordinary people.

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