

# **The Social Benefits of Sport**

**An Overview to Inform the Community Planning Process**

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This monitor critically assesses research on the benefits of sport and summaries of key information are added regularly to the website where they are considered to be reliable.

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## Introduction

The first of five principles that inform *Sport 21 2003-2007 – the national strategy for sport* is that:

“participating in sport can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities, promote social inclusion, improve health, counter anti-social behaviour, raise individual self-esteem and confidence, and widen horizons.”  
(**sportscotland**, 2003, p7)

However, sport alone will not solve Scottish society’s ills. This document illustrates how, in conjunction with other factors, sport has the potential to contribute to society in general and aspects of community planning in particular.

It shows that, in partnership with a range of organisations and agencies, sport can assist in the achievement of their policy objectives. In particular, in the context of local community planning, this document will demonstrate the extent to which sport may contribute to:

- improvements in people’s physical and mental health, and well-being;
- the promotion and enhancement of education and life-long learning;
- the promotion of active citizenship;
- programmes aimed at combating crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- economic development.

Target 11 of *Sport 21* is that by 2007 “every local authority area’s community planning process will have contributed to the targets of *Sport 21 2003-2007*”. The purpose of this document is to provide a balanced view of the evidence for the social benefits of sport that can inform the inclusion of sport in community plans.

**sportscotland**, January 2005

## Background

### Sport and Community Planning

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 places a duty on local authorities to secure best value, and provides them with a power to “advance well-being” in their local areas.

This duty and power will be exercised within new community planning approaches, based on greater integration and cross-organisational working. Consequently, community planning has the potential to provide an overarching framework within which multi-agency collaborative working can be developed to address a wide range of community issues.

In this context, **sportscotland** believes that sport has a significant contribution to make to the community planning process and many of the multi-agency issues that it will seek to address.

Community planning will be a key mechanism for making connections between national and local priorities, and the inclusion of sport will ensure that consideration is given to the national strategy for sport endorsed by the Scottish Executive, *Sport 21 2003-2007* (**sportscotland**, 2003). Target 11 of this strategy is that by 2007 each local authority’s community planning process will contribute to the achievement of the *Sport 21* targets.

In addition, the Strategy for Physical Activity (Physical Activity Task Force, 2003) is clear that community planning represents an important mechanism for the achievement of its aims and objectives. More generally, Sport England’s *The value of sport* (1999) suggests that, in new integrated planning approaches, sport can “often lead the way in promoting ‘joined up’ ways of working which impact positively on many aspects of people’s lives”.

In general, increased opportunities for sport can be regarded as a contributor to community well-being, and local authorities are required to make “adequate provision for facilities for the inhabitants of their area for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities” (Local Government etc (Scotland) Act, 1994). This is reflected in the first key principle of *Sport 21 2003-2007* which states that:

“participating in sport can improve the quality of life of individuals and communities...”

### Sport and the Nature of its Contribution

In this document, the definition of sport is the broad, inclusive one offered by the Council of Europe (2001):

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

In addition to acknowledging that sport, independently, cannot solve a wide variety of social problems, it is also important to acknowledge the limitations of the research evidence for many of the claimed impacts of sport. These limitations derive from three broad factors:

- The lack of robust research in many of the current priority areas in social policy.
- The difficulties in measuring many of the claimed effects of sports participation, and of separating them from other influences. For example, reduction in crime may not simply reflect the provision of sports programmes aimed at diverting young people from crime and anti-social behaviour, but a range of other policies or wider environmental improvements.
- Many of sport's effects are indirect. For example, the belief that participation in sport reduces the propensity to commit crime is based on the assumption that this will be the outcome of such intermediate outcomes as increased self-esteem and self-discipline (Taylor, 1999). However, the measurement of cause and effect – between inputs and actual changes of behaviour – presents certain difficulties (Coalter, 2002).

Consequently, it must be recognised that the sports-related benefits outlined in this document are “only a possibility” (Svoboda, 1994) and a clear distinction is to be made between:

- *necessary conditions* (ie, participation in sport); and
- *sufficient conditions* (ie, processes which maximise the potential for desired outcomes).

As the desired positive outcomes are only a possibility, it is essential to understand the nature of the processes and conditions that will maximise the potential to achieve specific outcomes.

Throughout this document, research evidence will be referred to which indicates that, to achieve the full potential of sport, it is necessary to be aware of a number of factors:

- **Managing for Outcomes.** It is essential to be clear about the assumptions underpinning provision and the nature of expected outcomes – certain sports and physical activities may be better than others at achieving particular outcomes for different individuals and groups. An understanding of such assumptions is essential in order to manage the

programme to maximise the possibility of achieving desired outcomes (Coalter, 2002).

- **The Nature of the Sporting Experience.** Sport is not a homogeneous, standardised product or experience – the nature of the experience will be subject to wide variations, as will the effects.
- **Supervision, Leadership and Management.** These will impact on the nature and extent of the effects. Evidence points to the importance of sports leaders, especially in obtaining positive outcomes among young people at risk (Sports Council Research Unit North West, 1990; Nichols and Taylor, 1996; Witt and Crompton, 1997).
- **Frequency, Intensity and Adherence.** Any effects on sports participants will be determined by the frequency of participation, intensity of participation, and their degree of adherence over time. Although these factors are especially important in order to obtain fitness and health benefits, they also have implications for the development of sporting and social skills and changed attitudes and values.

# Sport, Fitness and Health

## A Healthier Nation

There is a widespread consensus about the general links between physical activity and health (US Department of Health and Human Services, 1996; European Heart Network, 1999). It is accepted that regular physical activity can contribute to a reduction in the incidence of the following:

- **Obesity.** Obesity is recognised as a medical condition and as a major contributor to a number of serious chronic illnesses – heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and cancer. Twenty-one per cent of the Scottish adult population are regarded as obese; 22.1% of women, and 19.6% per cent of men. The last Scottish Health Survey (1998) also indicated increasing levels of obesity among children. Among 2-15 year-olds, 9.8% of boys and 6.7% of girls were recorded as obese. Physical activity, in the context of broader lifestyle changes and healthy eating, can make a significant contribution to the control and reduction of obesity and associated health risks (Welk and Blair, 2000).
- **Cardiovascular Disease.** It is now well established that regular physical activity and increased cardio-respiratory fitness reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease mortality in general, and of coronary heart disease mortality in particular. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996; European Heart Network, 1999).
- **Non-insulin Dependent Diabetes.** There is a strong link between type II diabetes and sedentary lifestyles. Physical activity would seem a prudent strategy for all people, especially those who are at risk of type II diabetes (Krisha, 1997; Boule et al, 2002).
- **Colon Cancer.** Evidence linking inactivity and a variety of cancers has grown over the last decade (Thune and Furberg, 2001). The evidence for a positive relationship between regular physical activity and reduced risks of colon cancer is “convincing”, and for breast and prostate cancer “probable” (Marrett et al, 2000).
- **Osteoporosis.** There is some evidence to suggest that load-bearing/resistance-based physical activity throughout childhood and early adolescence can contribute to the reduction in the incidence of osteoporosis (Shaw and Snow, 1995; Puntilla et al, 1997; Kemper et al, 2000).
- **Haemorrhagic Strokes.** Although there are many factors that contribute to the incidence of strokes, evidence suggests that increased left ventricular mass without physical activity results in a high risk of stroke (Rodriguez et al, 2002). In Scotland, 6% of strokes have been assessed as attributable to obesity (Walker, 2003).



The evidence of such links underpins the Scottish Executive's endorsement of increased physical activity as a vital part of its preventative health policy. Highlighting the fact that 72% of women and 59% of men are not active enough for health, the Physical Activity Task Force (2003, p10) concludes:

“As a nation, Scotland is inactive, unfit and increasingly overweight (obese). The health of two-thirds of the Scottish adult population is now at risk from physical inactivity, making it the most common risk factor for coronary disease in Scotland today. Perhaps most worryingly, this trend starts before young people have left school.”

The cost of this is substantial, with nearly 2,500 Scots dying prematurely each year due to physical inactivity (Physical Activity Task Force, 2003, p17).

Further, low levels of physical activity are accompanied by widespread perceptions among the public that their fitness levels are better than their exercise levels suggest (Health Education Board for Scotland, 1997).

Consequently, the official recommendations (Physical Activity Task Force, 2003, p13) are that:

- “Adults should **accumulate** (build up) at least 30 minutes of moderate activity on most days of the week.”
- “Children should **accumulate** (build up) at least one hour of moderate activity on most days of the week.”

Generally, ‘moderate activity’ is using about five to seven calories a minute – the equivalent of brisk walking.

Sport specifically and physical activity more generally are not the sole answers to such widespread health issues – issues of diet, lifestyle and poverty are central to many health issues (Roberts and Brodie, 1992). Nevertheless, there are clear health gains to be obtained by a general increase in regular participation in sport and other physical activity, especially among those who are most inactive (Blair and Connelly, 1996) and even starting to exercise in middle age will have a protective effect (Morris, 1994).

Sport can offer physical activity opportunities for everyone because of its diversity, including such potentially ‘lifelong activities’ as cycling, swimming, aerobics, walking, tennis and badminton. The acknowledgement of this contribution and the centrality of physical activity to a healthy lifestyle is reflected in many partnerships with health agencies, especially GP referral schemes.

## GP Referral Scheme

An example of good practice, and demonstrating positive partnerships between sport and health professionals, is the Glasgow GP Exercise Referral Scheme. This is coordinated by a team of Health and Fitness Development Officers (HFDOs) within Glasgow City's Cultural and Leisure Services and largely funded by NHS Greater Glasgow. GPs refer appropriate patients to an HFDO who identifies a local exercise programme. An evaluation of 5,173 who were referred the scheme found that:

- 31% of those referred continued on the programme, 12% of referrals attended until the three-month assessment, 5% of referrals attended until the six-month stage, 5% until the nine-month stage and 9% per cent returned at the final 12-month assessment.
- Some participants decided to leave, for reasons such as deciding to buy equipment and exercise at home, or finding alternative forms of exercise. Some stopped because they felt that they had been 'cured', and their health returned.
- The duration of physical activity per week increased with participation on the programme (especially between baseline and the three-month stage).
- There were reductions in systolic blood pressure for those participating beyond baseline stage, and reductions in diastolic blood pressure for those participating for at least three weeks.
- There was a reduction in depression and anxiety for those who moved beyond the baseline stage.
- Over 60% saw improvements in their general health and general fitness, and in how they felt about themselves.
- The most frequently-mentioned additional benefit was the social aspects of the programme.
- Over two-thirds felt that participation had given them the confidence to exercise independently (this increased with length of time of programme).

(Greater Glasgow NHS Board, 2002)

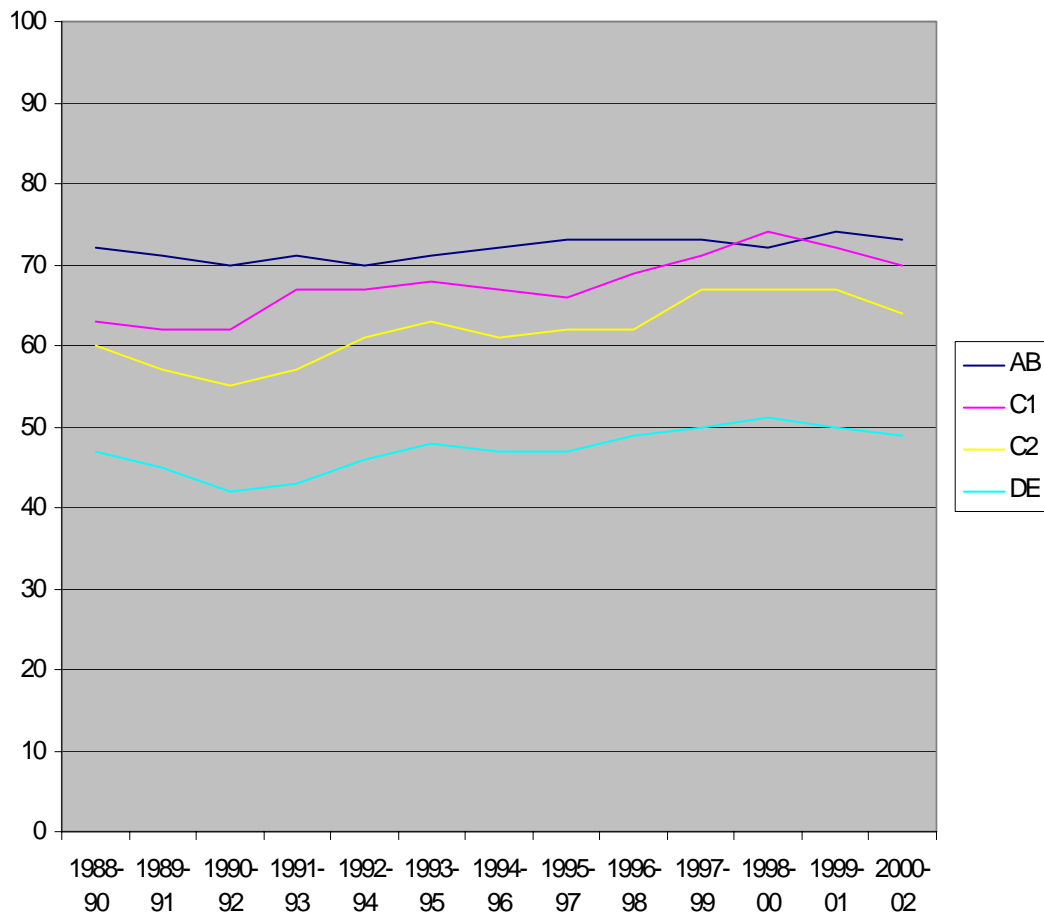
Those involved in health-orientated initiatives acknowledge that short-term projects may have limited impacts on deep-rooted health problems and attitudes to physical activity (Coalter et al, 2000). To sustain commitment to activity, a number of factors need to be addressed: infrastructure (eg, crèches); local provision (transport issues and family responsibilities often restrict the time available); and continuing social support (Loughlan and Mutrie, 1997).

Roberts and Brodie (1992), in the only large-scale longitudinal UK study of the health impacts of sport, conclude that if sport is to contribute to improved fitness and health, providers will need to address three broad issues:

- Even among current sports participants, the frequency of activity is often less than that required to achieve and sustain health benefits (of course, if sport is part of a more generally active lifestyle, it can make an important contribution).
- The reduction of the cyclical nature of participation and improvement of adherence - increasing both regular and long-term participation.

- The persistent socio-demographic differences in levels of sports participation (Fig 1). Despite overall increases in sports participation, there has been a failure to narrow most differentials based on social class. Social classes D and E maintain an especially low level of participation.

**Figure 1: Social Class and Adult Sports Participation in Scotland (including walking), 1988-90 to 1998-2000**



Note: Social class E includes a significant proportion of retired people who are solely dependent on state benefits – hence age is also a factor in the low participation rates of this group.

Roberts and Brodie (1992) argue that such data indicate a need for a fundamental and sustained change in promoting school sport (for example, through **sportscotland's** Active Primary School and School Sport Coordinator programmes, now expanded under the Active Schools umbrella), increased local facility provision and changed management practices which take account of financial, social, cultural and motivational constraints on under-participating groups (see also Cabinet Office, 2002).

## The Social Nature of Sport

Emphasising the social nature of most sporting activities may serve to provide encouragement and support to ensure the level of frequency and adherence required to obtain sport-related health benefits.

In addition to encouraging continued participation, the social aspects of sport can make a more diffuse contribution to health improvement. The Acheson Report on inequalities and health (quoted in Health Education Authority, 1999, pp1/3) emphasises the importance of these social aspects:

“...opportunities afforded by exercise might also lead to wider social networks and social cohesion.”

“It has been suggested that people with good social networks live longer, are at reduced risk of coronary heart disease, are less likely to report being depressed or to suffer a recurrence of cancer, and are less susceptible to infectious illness than those with poor networks.”

Such social processes are also central to sport’s ability to contribute to aspects of mental health.

## Sport and Mental Health

Research evidence illustrates that physical activity, and associated processes, can contribute positively to mental health (with the obvious exceptions of over-training and training addiction) and have a positive effect on anxiety, depression, mood and emotion, self-esteem and psychological dysfunction (SPAG, 1999; Mutrie and Biddle, 1995).

However, there are concerns about how these disputed conditions are defined and measured, and there is a poor understanding of the mechanisms that underlie the relationship between physical activity and psychological well-being (Scully et al, 1998; Fox, 1999).

Nevertheless, research evidence illustrates the following:

- Participation in a one-off bout of physical activity can result in a reduction in anxiety levels and self-reported feelings of increased well-being. Such improvements have been reported to last for up to three hours after the activity session (Raglin, 1990; Steptoe, 1992).
- Improved self-esteem, self-efficacy and perceived competence result from long-term participation in an exercise programme (King et al, 1989).
- Roberts and Brodie (1992) found that minor increases in sporting activity can lead to increases in positive self-assessments.

- Different types of physical activity may be effective in relation to particular conditions. Furthermore, different psychological conditions respond differently to differing exercise regimes; for example, non-aerobic, aerobic, anaerobic, and short, medium or long-term duration, all have differing impacts (Scully et al, 1998; Fox,1999).

Coalter et al (2000) report evidence from Scottish case studies that, while the concentration on physical/cardiovascular health messages may have had limited impacts, sociability and a reduction of a sense of social isolation were regarded as very important by participants:

A young female participant in a keep-fit programme stated: “it’s a great way to make friends – I only really knew one person in the group before I came here – now we’re all pals.”

On a 50-plus programme for women, regular attendance had resulted in the establishment of friendship networks and a holiday group.

(Coalter et al, 2000)

Sport clearly has the potential to provide a variety of social and recreational networks and a regular routine, which promotes social interaction – elements central to community development, social inclusion and mental health (Thomas, 1995; Forrest and Kearns, 1999).

## Conclusions

Much of the research evidence relates to the health benefits of **physical activity**, rather than sport per se. Among the least active and least healthy groups, the promotion of an ‘active lifestyle’ may be a more useful strategy than the promotion of sport and ‘fitness’. For example, research on physical activity promotion schemes indicates that sports/leisure centres may not be the most suitable venues, at least in the early stages of such programmes (Health Development Agency, 2003; Riddoch et al, 1998).

Nevertheless, the umbrella term ‘sport’ encompasses a wide range of activities that can be undertaken in a variety of formal and informal contexts and can be adjusted to take account of a wide variety of confidence and skill levels. Furthermore, the social nature of most sporting activities can serve to provide encouragement and support, ensuring the level of frequency and adherence required to obtain physical and psychological health benefits.

There is a need to move beyond traditional approaches to marketing and adopt a ‘social marketing’ approach (Cabinet Office, 2002). This seeks to apply commercial marketing to social situations by focusing on the various stages of behaviour change. In doing so, it requires a more sophisticated understanding of

inactive people's readiness and willingness for change (Wimbush, 1994; Loughlan and Mutrie, 1997; Riddoch et al, 1998).

Factors underpinning the success of activity provision have included:

- appropriate and convenient local facilities;
- recognising the importance of participants' friendship groups in getting involved and staying involved;
- providing reassurance that 'people just like us' are able to participate;
- acknowledging, particularly to older people, that some physical activity will be better than none; and
- recognising that if the activity has some intrinsic value (fun, enjoyment, a change of environment), it may be more appealing and ensure adherence.

(Health Development Agency, 2003)

# Sport, Young People and Education

## Physical Activity, Sport and Academic Achievement

There is a widespread assumption that taking part in sport and other physical activity results in better academic achievement. The presumed (although unproven) mechanisms underpinning this relationship vary and include:

- increased energy derived from fitness;
- productive diversion resulting from time away from classroom;
- reduced disruptive behaviour;
- improved cognitive functioning as a result of increased cerebral blood flow or improvement of brain neurotransmitters; and
- a relationship between motor and mental skills and increased self-esteem.

(Etnier et al, 1997; Lindner, 1999)

However, the factors involved are complex and raise significant issues of measurement. For example, in a major review of relevant research, Etnier et al (1997) conclude that the largest measured relationships are obtained from the weakest research designs and the weakest relationships are found in the most robust research designs.

Sallis et al (1999) illustrate that few relevant research findings are based on standardised, comparable, tests. Consequently, there is no definitive evidence of a positive, causal relationship between physical activity/sport and academic achievement. Where such correlations have been found, the explanation for the nature and direction of cause remains speculative (Etnier et al, 1997; Shephard, 1997; Lindner, 1999; Sallis et al, 1999).

However, within this context, there are some suggestive findings:

- Thomas et al (1994) conclude that the benefits of regular exercise on cognitive functioning are small but reliable for reaction time, sharpness and maths.
- Etnier et al (1997) found that both short-term and sustained exercise programmes resulted in small positive gains in cognitive performance (such as reaction time, perception, memory, reasoning).
- Inspections of specialist Sports Colleges in England have shown early signs that examination results in physical education and other subjects are improving since physical education and sport have become central elements of the colleges (Ofsted and the Youth Sport Trust, 2000).

Contrary to the fears of some parents, research undertaken with control groups and using standardised tests suggests that devoting substantially increased school time to physical education and sport does not have a detrimental effect on pupils' academic performance – while also conferring physical and mental health benefits (Sallis et al, 1999).

## The Importance of Sport

As in other areas, sport's more obvious contribution may be **indirect** and lie in its ability to contribute positively to partnerships with educationalists and others. In particular, research evidence indicates that the importance of sport for many young people means that it may have a significant role to play in educational policy.

For example, evidence suggests that sport can assist in the peer integration of young people with disabilities. A study by Taub and Greer (2000) found that physical activity was a normalising experience for children with physical disabilities, provides a legitimacy to their social identity as children, and enhances social skills and social networks with their peers.

### Sidlaw Primary School

The project was for pupils with special educational needs and aimed to improve their social skills and ability to work with others.

The children attended special classes, which included sport, art, environmental studies and music.

The sports were the most popular activities and also had a useful cathartic function for high activity children.

Teachers regarded the initiative as having had a positive impact on the pupils involved, although progress, inevitably, was slow.

The popularity of the sessions, especially the sports component, appears to have reduced non-attendance. One participant who missed 14 weeks of school during the previous year did not miss a week in the first term.

(Coalter et al, 2000)

Furthermore, the broader significance of sport for many young people enables it to attract educational underachievers to educational environments in which they have the opportunity to raise their level of educational achievement.



### **Playing for Success**

This is a ten-week programme for underachieving pupils based in Study Support Centres in professional football clubs and other sports venues.

Small groups work on a range of activities. These include an integrated learning system testing maths, spelling and reading. Also, an internet and emailing session, CD-Rom and word processing, and a non-computer based activity (such as completing homework, using a video camera, paired reading, painting or technology).

A four-year evaluation found significant improvement in pupils' literacy, numeracy and use of information and communications technology (ICT). Although initially below national averages of literacy and numeracy, pupils' scores had risen closer to national norms by the end of the course. For numeracy, pupils were achieving just below the expected level for their age.

Comparisons with the control group have shown that gains were greatest for ICT and numeracy, with pupils outperforming the control group to a statistically significant extent.

The educational gains are explained by such things as access to computers, high ratio of staff to pupils, and an informal, supportive atmosphere. However, the sporting connection is important in attracting pupils, as it adds to the excitement and interest of the initiative. In addition, pupils feel special and privileged to be chosen to participate, rather than stigmatised as being in need of extra help.

(Sharp et al, 2003)

### **A Step to Employment**

The appeal of sport and sports-related employment can also be used within the curriculum to engage disaffected pupils and improve academic performance and commitment to continuing education.

### **Supported Study and Sports-related Education**

Cooperation between a community school and a local authority recreation department allowed the provision of a supported study programme (during school hours), leading to a Junior Sports Leader Award.

The programme was made available to pupils who were not expected to achieve standard grades qualifications and were likely to leave school at the minimum age.

The sports-centred programme contained a range of other educational and developmental components including an initial residential team-building day, participation in a drugs/vandalism awareness workshop, and a job preparation programme.

All 12 young people on the programme were regarded as having obtained positive results. Five secured 'apprenticeships' (three with the recreation department facility in their local community), one found permanent employment, and six progressed to further education (four attended a vocational course, while two returned to school when they had been expected to leave).

(Coalter al, 2000)

## **Conclusions**

Although the evidence for a positive, causal relationship between participation in sport and improved academic performance is inconclusive, there are clear indications that it does not have a negative effect, and it does confer physical and emotional benefits.

The importance of sport in many young people's lives can be used to attract educationally underachieving young people to educational programmes (although outcomes will depend on the nature and quality of the learning environment).

# Community Development

## Social Capital and Active Citizenship

Government is increasingly concerned with addressing issues of community cohesion, social inclusion and 'active citizenship'. Much thinking in this area has been influenced by the concept of 'social capital' (Cabinet Office, 2002). Although this is not a new concept, it is most closely associated with the work of Putman (2000), who defines communities that are rich in social capital as being those in which there are:

- strong community networks/civic infrastructure, with widespread involvement in the organisational life of the community;
- a sense of local identity/solidarity/equality; and
- reportedly high levels of interpersonal trust and reciprocal support.

This concept underpins the Home Office Active Community/Citizenship initiatives and the Health Development Agency's concern to promote 'healthy communities'.

## Sport and Social Participation

The potential of sport to facilitate such social participation is illustrated by the Home Office's citizenship survey (Prime et al, 2002). This found that, in the last 12 months, 33% of the adult population was involved in groups, clubs or organisations for taking part in sport and exercise or going to watch sport. This was the largest single category of 'social participation'. Hobbies, recreation, arts and social clubs were second with 24% cent participation.

Such a perspective suggests that, in developing sport in the community, it may also be possible to contribute to the development of communities **through** sport (Coalter and Allison, 1996; Coalter et al, 2000). However, evidence suggests that 'non-traditional' approaches (these are discussed below) will be required if such potential is to be realised, and that sport's potential is maximised via partnerships with other agencies.

## Developing Communities

Residents of deprived areas are often subject to a variety of 'development' initiatives and are often naturally sceptical about new initiatives. For example, Deane (1998) found a high level of scepticism about Action Sport programmes because they were viewed as short-term initiatives. He argues that many of the schemes:

“suffered... credibility problems with local community representatives. Local community representatives perceived the schemes as being a short-term attempt by central government to show that they were doing something for the young unemployed... [and] saw the Action Sport schemes as a complete waste of resources.”

Deane's (1998) solution is a 'bottom-up' approach, which seeks to address wider inclusion issues through sport. This is achieved by supporting existing projects, or by recruiting and training the unemployed and operating a positive discrimination policy when employing sports leaders from the local community. Research indicates that emphasising the productive contribution that sports projects can make to the local community can assist in the development of a sense of ownership and commitment, and is more likely to encourage voluntary contributions (Witt and Crompton, 1996; Utting, 1996).

Summarising the Action Sport experience, McDonald and Tungatt (1992, p33) stated that, although Action Sport challenged the values of traditional sports provision:

“...the widely used term 'sports development' still has connotations of coaching and competition for some community development agencies. This must be avoided. Objectives and, more importantly, performance indicators must be set and judged by people who understand the nature of the work.”

In this regard, the Leisure and Environmental Protection Department of Newport County Borough Council (1999, pp4, 5) suggests that:

“Developing sports activities in deprived communities will necessarily take a different form to developments in more affluent areas... While sport can have a positive role to play in addressing social cohesion, this is unlikely to happen if it is organised or promoted along conventional lines. Engaging the most disaffected... can best be achieved through the deployment of a combination of community development and sports development resources.”

Consequently, a more all-encompassing role for community/sports development workers is proposed; one that is clearly in tune with the new cross-sectoral, collaborative working central to community planning. Their job would be to:

- establish or generate local interest in sports, and engage the community in both planning and playing;
- develop within community groups and organisations the capacity to fundraise for local sports activities and to prepare bids for appropriate resources;
- act as a catalyst and liaise with key agencies to ensure they can intervene, when opportunities arise, to support individuals or groups in meeting other

personal or community objectives (such as employment advice or lobbying on non-sport issues);

- support groups and communities in their efforts to establish real ownership of local resources, such as sports facilities and thus increase participation; and
- identify and train local sports leaders, team managers, coaches and helpers to provide an infrastructure for sustained activity.

The need to train sports leaders and managers relates to a central feature of sport, and one which has the potential to contribute significantly to the development of active citizenship – sport's dependence on volunteers.

## Volunteering in Sport

Sporting opportunities depend heavily on volunteer input and early indications from a Scottish survey of participation suggest that around 16% of the adult population had taken part in some kind of sports-related volunteering in the previous year, including 3.8% who did so regularly (once a week or more). This amounts to more than 150,000 adults.

Target 10 in Sport 21 is to sustain these 150,000 volunteers in their contribution to the development and delivery of Scottish sport.

Surveys in England indicate similar proportions involved in sports volunteering, which accounts for over a quarter of all volunteering (Sport England, 2003).

Consequently, volunteer effort in sport has a high social and economic value. For example, a recent Sport England (2003) report estimated that the value of the time contributed by sports volunteers in England at over £14billion. This effort sustains over 100,000 clubs with over 8 million members. It makes a major contribution to the provision of sporting opportunities and, through unpaid labour, substantially reduces the cost of participation. Importantly, it also offers the possibilities for the development of a sense of self-esteem and social purpose.

The key policy message is that many of the potentially positive social benefits of sport are not only to be obtained via participation.

Involvement in the organisation and provision of opportunities for sport also has the potential to assist in the development of self-esteem, transferable social and organisational skills and greater community coherence.

Sport England (2003) found that, despite increasing pressures on volunteers, the 'social benefits' derived from volunteering are dominant, with the related concepts of 'enjoyment' and 'giving something back' also frequently cited as benefits.

The report also illustrates that “young people are much more likely to acknowledge the functional benefit of volunteering for their CVs and qualifications. Volunteering can help young people gain a degree of empowerment and recognition.”

A nine-month study of young people’s (aged 16-19) sports projects in the Millennium Volunteers programme (Eley and Kirk, 2002) found increases in measures of altruistic attitudes, community-orientation, leadership skills and feeling better about themselves. The authors refer to the practicality of using sport to attract young people to volunteering and conclude that, where positive conditions that permit fun, learning, qualifications, empowerment and flexibility are present, volunteering in sport is:

“of benefit to the young person who realises that he or she will never be good enough to reach the elite performance level... but wants to maintain involvement... Sport provides an avenue to learn social responsibility, leadership skills and confidence for life.”

Although this is not an area without its problems (including the relationship between volunteers and paid employees, insurance and liability, and child protection issues), it has significant potential for the involvement of those who may wish to contribute to, but not necessarily participate in, sport.

## Supporting and Encouraging Volunteers

If local authorities and governing bodies are to encourage and support volunteers, for the good of both sport and the community, they will need to address a number of key issues:

- There is a need for a more systematic approach to the recruitment and training of all types of volunteers in sport (Sports Council, 1996). In England, these issues are being addressed by the Volunteer Investment Programme and Running Sport. **sportscotland** developed a strategy for volunteer development and support in 2004, published on its website as the strategy to meet Target 10 of *Sport 21 2003-2007* (by 2007, “Scotland will sustain 150,000 volunteers who are contributing to the development and delivery of Scottish sport”).
- Because many potential volunteers lack confidence (McDonald and Tungatt, 1992; Sports Council, 1996; Coalter et al, 2000), substantial encouragement and support is required to enable them to undertake such roles.
- To encourage volunteer coaches, “it is important that the initial stages in coaching awards are easy to attain” (Sports Council, 1996) and that appropriate subsidies are provided for the costs of coach training courses and associated travel.

- A bottom-up approach and a sense of ‘ownership’ are important aspects of successful initiatives. McDonald and Tungatt (1992) highlight a project that worked with existing community groups and enabled women to run their own sessions (with the assistance of a part-time community activity organiser). Such involvement also contributed to a longer-term commitment and participation: “...the sense of ownership has enabled many to adapt to the inevitable short-term lifestyle changes which... often... result in a return to non-participation”.
- Taylor (2003) identifies three broad sets of pressures which are affecting voluntary sports organisations and placing increased pressures on volunteers. These are: competition for people and their time; institutional and funding pressure to perform better; and an increasing variety of technical and legal demands.

## Broadening Horizons

Although increased local provision and opportunities are essential to encourage participation, there are also the potentially negative consequences of reinforcing already ‘defensive communities’ who are suspicious of outsiders and not wholly integrated with the wider society (Cabinet Office, 2002).

Rather than strengthening rather limited ‘bonding social capital’ (relationships **within** groups), the need is to develop ‘bridging social capital’, which strengthens understanding and links **between** various groups within increasingly diverse communities. Consequently, what is required is,

“...organisations that involve more diverse memberships, including contact with people of different nationalities or ethnicities (are more likely to stimulate significantly higher levels of generalised trust.”

(Cabinet Office, 2002)

In this regard, there are a number of examples where sport has been used in an attempt to widen horizons, especially those of young people:

- A community-based sports trust sought to bring in outsiders by attracting teams from outside the local community, and encouraging local young people to join such teams.
- The Glasgow Works Play/Sport project provided job-training opportunities outside its local area (although support was often required to enable people to overcome their reluctance to travel to other areas).
- In a Social Inclusion Partnership, free swim tickets encouraged families to swim in pools in other parts of the city.

(Coalter et al, 2000)

## Conclusions

'Bottom-up' approaches to developing sport in communities, which build on and assist existing (or emerging) programmes, provide a greater sense of involvement and ownership.

Where sports projects provide a contribution to addressing wider community issues (eg, unemployment, anti-social behaviour, obtaining grants), they are more likely to be acceptable and sustainable.

Because of its high social value, volunteering in sport offers possibilities for the development of a sense of self-esteem and social purpose.

There is a need for a more systematic approach to the recruitment, training and support of volunteers, based on an appreciation of the personal and professional development needs of potential recruits.

It is probably unrealistic to expect all such programmes to be self-sustaining. Evidence suggests that there will be a need for ongoing support from skilled professional workers and this should be acknowledged by strategic and mainstreamed funding.



# Youth Crime

## Youth Justice Strategy

The Scottish Executive has accorded a high priority to tackling youth crime. Although young people tend to be involved in relatively minor offences (Scottish Executive, 2002), the Scottish Crime Survey indicates that male offending in the 12-15 age group increased between 1993 and 2000 (from 28% committing at least one offence in the previous year to 36%), with female offending increasing even more dramatically (17% to 32%).

As part of the youth justice strategy the intention is to:

- develop appropriate preventive and early intervention strategies;
- divert young people from developing a pattern of offending behaviour;
- reduce the number of persistent young offenders (between 1995 and 2000/01, those dealt with by a Children's Hearing who had committed ten or more offences increased by 5%); and
- develop multi-agency approaches to provide appropriate community-based programmes.

Several policy-related reviews of the potential social value of sport (Sport England, 1999; Collins et al, 1999; Best, 2001; Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 1999; Coalter et al, 2000, Cabinet Office, 2002) list the prevention of youth crime as an issue to which sports can make a contribution, both in terms of diverting young people from crime and in the rehabilitation of offenders.

Sport's presumed potential to achieve such outcomes is based on assumptions about its 'therapeutic' qualities. For example, Schafer (1969) outlines five elements underpinning the therapeutic potential of sport:

- By the use of 'differential association', young people at risk are removed from the criminal culture of their peer groups and mix with more positive role models.
- Sport provides an alternative to educational underachievement, blocked aspirations and low self-esteem.
- Sport encourages the development of self-discipline.
- Sport provides an antidote to boredom.
- Sport addresses certain adolescent development needs for adventure, excitement and autonomy.

(Coalter et al, 2000)

## Diversionsary Programmes

The most common policy approach has been various forms of 'diversionary' sports programmes, such as the much-publicised summer Splash programme, that concentrate on a core of at-risk 13-17 year olds.

As these schemes have developed, some have included developmental activities, such as advice on anger management, alcohol and drug abuse, personal health and hygiene, and vocational training.

Evaluations in 2000 and 2002 claimed that the schemes had led to an aggregate reduction in 'youth crime' – although it was admitted that the evaluations are relatively simple and based on small samples (Loxley et al, 2001; Cap Gemini Ernst and Young, 2003).

Such programmes are based on the premise that much crime and anti-social behaviour are a function of boredom – 'the devil makes work for idle hands'. In providing non-criminal opportunities, the programmes aim "at the casual integration of youth at risk, in order to reduce delinquency rates by encouraging the positive use of their leisure time" (Robins, 1990, p19).

However, many large-scale diversionary programmes have a number of common weaknesses (Coalter et al, 2000; Robins, 1990; Utting, 1996):

- Vague rationales or over-ambitious objectives (often motivated by the need to impress funders with an apparent 'economy of solutions').
- The nature of the targeted 'anti-social behaviours' is often vague – implicitly including everything from petty, opportunity-led vandalism, to systematic theft and drug abuse, and ultimately to crimes of violence.
- Theories of the causes of delinquency are usually based on rather simple assumptions about boredom, opportunity-led crime or low self-esteem.

However, although diversionary sports programmes have a role to play, the causes of crime are complex. For example, Asquith et al (1998) list a range of socio-psychological 'high-risk factors' including hyperactivity, high impulsivity, low intelligence, poor parental management, parental neglect, offending parents and siblings, early child bearing, deprived background, absent father and maternal substance abuse in pregnancy. Reflecting this complexity, Sport England (1999, pp7/8) admits that:

"...it would be naïve to think, and unrealistic to claim, that sport alone can reduce the levels of youth crime in society... [however] strong experiential evidence exists to show that sport has a part to play in preventing crime".

In a Home Office review of programmes aimed at reducing criminality among young people, Utting (1996) concluded that:

“...it is difficult to argue that such activities have in themselves a generalisable influence on criminality. The lack of empirical research means important practice issues remain unresolved.”

Nevertheless, there are some suggestive findings:

- Jones and Offord (1989) reported an increase in skill-competency and a reduction in anti-social behaviour following participation in a recreation programme in two Ottawa housing projects.
- Witt and Crompton (1996) found that among those who undertook pre/post testing, all those who had taken part in structured sporting and physical activity programmes indicated improvements in various scores, compared to children who had participated in other, less structured, activities.
- A multi-agency scheme in a Bristol youth centre, addressing problems of drug-taking and associated levels of criminal activity, claimed a 15% reduction in crime in the local beat area and a 43% reduction in juvenile crime (Sport England, 1999).

## Integrated Development Programmes

Most evidence suggests that sport's potential is maximised by working in partnership with other agencies, understanding the complex causes of crime and recognising that the process of delivery (especially leadership) is vitally important. For example, Utting (1996) argues that the effectiveness of sports programmes in preventing crime depends on achieving at least some of the following:

- Improvements in cognitive and social skills. This is supported by Asquith et al's (1998) research on young offenders in Scotland, which concludes that approaches that seek to develop cognitive skills and change behaviour appear to be the most effective in strategies of prevention and rehabilitation.
- Reductions in impulsiveness and risk-taking behaviour.
- Raised self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Improvements in education and employment prospects.

The analyses of the Leisure and Environmental Protection Department (1999) of Newport County Borough Council, that sport's contribution to such issues is best achieved through the deployment of a combination of community development and sports development resources, is also relevant here. Sport will be at its most effective **as part of a broader approach to diversion**.

The **salience** of sport (its importance and significance) for many young people permits it to be used as a medium to reach at-risk youth (Crompton and Witt, 1997). One example of this is 'midnight basketball' leagues:

### Night Hoops Programme

It is claimed that the Kansas City Night Hoops programme has produced “an overall 25% decrease in crime” and that “other cities who run hoops programs report similar results” (Wilkins, 1997, p60).

However, such positive results are not simply a function of participation in sport, but of a much more complex programme.

Although basketball is the key to making contact with at-risk youth, “the most urgent objective” is education and life-learning (Wilkins, 1997, p60). The highly structured programme includes non-traditional education components which seek to develop employment skills, personal development, self-esteem, conflict resolution, health awareness and substance abuse prevention.

While sport plays a central role in this programme, the clear implication is that ‘diversion’ must be complemented by **development**, and that sport cannot achieve the desired outcomes on its own, especially among those most at risk.

British context research indicates that the most successful Action Sport schemes gained ‘legitimacy’ through offering training opportunities as a priority to the young unemployed.

(Deane, 1998)

### Youth Works

This scheme in the North-East of England trained 40 young people in youth/sports leadership awards, through supervised activities with recreational activities, organised and facilitated by trained young people. The claimed outcomes are (ILAM, 1999):

- 40% reduction in crime.
- 30% reduction in ‘trouble’.
- £200,000 reduction in vandalism.
- 70% reduction in calls to the police.

In this, as in many other cases, much of the local crime was undertaken by a very small number of young males, making targeting relatively straightforward and increasing effectiveness.

Such integrated approaches, combining diversion with development, are positively evaluated by Utting (1996, p84), who suggests that sporting and leisure activities have a positive role to play as “ingredients in wider ranging prevention

initiatives". He suggests that programmes can only be successful if they are concerned with other aspects of young people's everyday lives, including school attendance, training opportunities and job-search.

## The Importance of Sports Leadership

In addition to developmental opportunities, research suggests that the **process of participation** is vitally important. Svoboda (1994) contends that positive outcomes are most likely to occur through appropriate supervision, leadership or management. Witt and Crompton (1996, p16), in a review of crime diversion programmes in the USA, concluded that:

"...leadership is perhaps the most important element in determining the positive impact of a program, since it shapes what participants derive from their experience".

Further, programmes seem to be most successful when they are 'bottom-up' (Deane, 1998), with **local leadership** (often of a charismatic type) being a vital factor in the success of many programmes (Coalter et al, 2000).

### From Gladiator to Weightlifter

This play-based project in a large West of Scotland housing scheme contains many of the elements which research indicates are necessary to have a chance of success:

- Community-based, bottom-up programme.
- Charismatic leadership based on an understanding of the local community.
- The training and use of local recruits from the New Deal programme.
- Non-standard provision in local community halls.
- Project mobility by the use of a number of local community halls, and a minibus to transport children from "the roughest streets in the area to ensure that children who could not afford to travel, or were too scared to travel, to the hall were catered for".
- Local opportunities in the early evening for young people (local authority programmes for young people are offered between 4pm and 6.30pm, whereas this programme starts at 7pm).
- A clear sports development path, offering opportunities to progress to membership of a local (and highly successful) amateur weightlifting club.

(Coalter et al, 2000)

Evidence suggests that the potential for success is increased if young people are involved both in influencing the nature of the provision and in its management

(Coalter and Allison, 1996; Morgan, 1998; Fitzpatrick et al, 1998; West and Crompton, 2001). In an analysis of diversionary sports programmes in the United States, Witt and Crompton (1996, p22) stated that:

“...empowerment is an important theme that runs through these case studies. Empowerment enables youth to take ownership and responsibility for their recreational and social activities.”

In a review of research on adventure programmes for at-risk youth, West and Crompton (2001) emphasise wider aspects of the process and refer to the need for the incorporation of ‘protective factors’. They reject the simple concentration on raising participants’ self-concepts and self-esteem as a basis for addressing anti-social behaviour, arguing that the “possession of a comprehensive set of protective factors or assets was the key to youth avoiding engagement in deviant behavior”. ‘Protective factors’ include such elements as:

- participants knowing that there is at least one adult supporting their positive development;
- the existence of places to spend free time in a positive, productive environment in their home area;
- opportunities to work together in a group and learn how to resolve conflicts constructively;
- the opportunity to be around peers consistently who are demonstrating positive conventional behaviour; and
- placing a value on achievement.

(Witt and Crompton, 1997)

## Which Types of Sport Work Best?

Not all sports are relevant for many vulnerable and at-risk young people, and there is a clear need to adopt a needs-based rather than product-led approach (Coalter et al, 2000).

There is some evidence of the need for small-group or individual activities, which are non-competitive, emphasise personally-constructed goals and have a minimum of formal rules and regulations.

Sugden and Yiannakis (1982) suggest that certain adolescents reject organised, competitive mainstream sport because it contains elements similar to those which they have already failed to resolve – adherence to formal rules and regulations, achievement of externally-defined goals and competitive and testing situations.

Serok (1975) suggests that delinquents prefer games with fewer and less specified rules and with fewer requirements for conformity. Robins (1990) refers

to a number of diversionary sport projects whose main features were open access and a lack of rigid organisation.

The recognition of these issues underpins programmes that use sport to rehabilitate offenders and reduce recidivism. Such programmes often use outdoor adventure activities, or 'demanding physical activity programmes', aimed at developing personal and social skills, and improving self-confidence and self-efficacy. It is hoped that these will transfer to the wider social context and reduce offending behaviour (Coalter, 1988; Taylor et al, 1999; West and Crompton, 2001).

Although evidence for the success of such programmes is variable (Taylor et al, 1999), it has been argued that, when compared to the costs of prosecution and detention, such programmes are 'good value for money' (Tsuchiya, 1996). In 1994, Coopers and Lybrand estimated that "the benefit to society of preventing a single youth crime would be a cost saving equivalent to at least £2,300, just under half of which would be directly recoverable from the public purse".

## Conclusions

There are strong theoretical arguments for the potentially positive contribution that sport can make to reduce the propensity by young people to commit crime.

Large-scale diversionary projects tend to have vague rationales, overly-ambitious objectives and a relatively unsophisticated understanding of the variety and complexity of the causes of criminality.

Diversionary programmes need to be based on more precise understandings and definitions of the causes of criminality, the nature of sports' processes which are relevant to addressing such factors, and an understanding of the intermediate outcomes (changes in attitudes) required to achieve the desired final outcomes (changes in behaviour).

Available evidence suggests that outreach approaches, credible leadership, 'bottom-up' approaches and non-traditional, local provision appear to have the best chance of success with the most marginal at-risk groups. A needs-based, youth work approach may be more appropriate than a product-led sports development approach.

Crucially, sport is at its most effective when combined with programmes that address issues of personal and social development. "It appears that... playing sport will not lead to a permanent reduction in crime by itself. Successful programmes require a variety of other support mechanisms to be in place." (Cabinet Office, 2002)

# The Economic Impact of Sport

## Economic Benefits of an Active Population

We have already discussed the contribution sport (and physical activity more broadly) can make to individuals' improved fitness and health. However, these impacts also have an economic dimension. For example:

- It is estimated that the cost to the NHS in Scotland of treating illnesses attributable to obesity is some £170m per year (Walker, 2003).
- If the level of inactive Scots was reduced by one percentage point per year for five years, it could produce total savings to the NHS of £3.5m, resulting from reduced admissions for coronary heart disease, stroke and colon cancer (Scottish Executive Health Dept, 2002).

It is clear, therefore, that sport – as part of a wider health promotion agenda – is a good health and economic investment.

## Sport-related Consumer Expenditure

Sport-related consumer expenditure, and a wide range of associated products and services, contribute over £1bn to the Scottish economy (Table 1). In Scotland in 2001, such expenditure totalled an estimated £1,053m (excluding £192m of sport-related gambling), representing 2.1% of total consumer expenditure in Scotland (Leisure Industries Research Unit, 2003).

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**Table 1 Consumer Expenditure on Sport-related Goods and Services, 2001**

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<b>Sport-related Expenditure</b>	<b>£m</b>
Clothing and footwear sales	277
Participant sports: subscriptions and fees	261
Gambling	192
Sports equipment	127
TV rental, cable and satellite subscriptions	124
Other consumer expenditure on sport*	<u>265</u>
Total	1,245
<b>Total, excluding gambling</b>	<b>1,053</b>

\*Including admissions to spectator sports, sport-related travel, sport-related publications, and expenditure on boats.

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## Sport-related Employment – National

In Scotland in 2001, approximately 42,000 people were employed in sport-related jobs – nearly three-quarters in the commercial sports and commercial sports-related sectors – representing 1.6% of total employment.

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**Table 2: Sport-related Employment in Scotland, 2001**

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<b>Sector</b>	<b>Sport-related Jobs</b>
Commercial non-sport	16,500
Commercial sport	13,400
Local government	7,000
Voluntary sport	4,900
Central government	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,000</b>

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## Sport-related Employment – Local

In addition to macro-employment, it is worth noting that local sports provision also provides employment opportunities:

### **Sports-related Local Employment – An Example**

Multi-purpose sports centre in a Priority Partnership Area in Glasgow:

- 175 people employed during the construction phase.
- 45 people required to operate the facility.
- 500 staffed weekly coaching hours. As these are sessional opportunities they are regarded as 14 full-time equivalent jobs.
- User expenditure "should equate to around 70 indirect and induced jobs in the local economy" (although the basis of this estimate is not given).
- Total number of jobs created is estimated at 130 full-time equivalents, although because of the part-time and sessional nature of some of the jobs, over 200 people will see some employment benefit.

Hooper (1998)

## Economic Impact of Sporting Events

In addition to the sports-related employment provided by the commercial, public and voluntary sectors, sporting events can provide substantial short-term economic impacts. One example of this was the World Badminton Championships in Glasgow in 1997:

### **World Badminton Championships and Sudirman Cup, Glasgow, 1997**

The event attracted 21,700 spectator-attendances over two weeks, compared with an expected 30-40,000.

Visitors' expenditure (both team members and spectators) of £1.9m created an additional local income of £386,000.

This sum represented the equivalent of 31 full-time equivalent job-years (83% in the hotel/restaurant/catering sector).

Further expenditure of £296,000 by the organisers raised the local income to £445,000 (or the equivalent of 36 full-time equivalent job-years).

(Leisure Industries Research Centre, 1999a, pp19-28)

However, as the scale and nature of sports events vary, it is essential to recognise the varying potential for positive economic returns, and the crucial balance between spectator and participant dominated events. These differences are illustrated by the work of the Leisure Industries Research Centre (1999b; see also 1999a). This work discusses the following types of sports events and their associated economic potential:

- Irregular, one-off international **spectator** events with significant media interests (eg, World Cup, Olympics, Commonwealth Games). *Significant economic activity.*
- Major **spectator** events, media interests and part of annual cycle (eg, Six Nations, Open Golf, Scottish Cup Final). *Significant economic activity, low risk, but usually fixed venue.*
- Irregular, one-off, major international **spectator/competitor** events (eg, European Junior Swimming Championships, World Badminton Championships). *Limited economic activity. The more senior the event and the longer the event the larger the economic impact. Spectator numbers difficult to forecast.*
- Major **competitor** events that are part of an annual cycle (eg, national championships). *Limited economic activity, do not cover costs, other rationales required.*

Sporting events have substantial economic potential as well as other benefits (eg, goodwill, raising the profile of an area). However, this potential varies and care needs to be taken in assessing the feasibility of such events (Crompton, 1995; Késenne, 1999). The Leisure Industries Research Centre (1999b) has prepared a manual to assist in undertaking reliable economic assessments of the impact of such events, and this should assist in the more rational planning of sports events.

## Conclusions

There are clear economic benefits to be obtained from a more active and healthier population.

Sports-related expenditure accounts for about 2% of total consumer expenditure in Scotland and provides over 40,000 jobs.

Particular types of sporting events can provide substantial short-term benefits for local and regional economies.

## The Challenge

*Sport 21 2003-2007 – the national strategy for sport* (sportscotland, 2003) recognises that “Scottish sport faces a tremendous challenge even to realise just some of the aspirations for sport. Its aim to contribute to society provides an even greater challenge”.

This document has acknowledged the scale of this challenge. It has also admitted the limitations of the research evidence in certain areas. However, it has sought to illustrate the nature of the contribution that sport can make in the areas of health, education, social inclusion, combating crime and economic development.

Most importantly, it has emphasised that this contribution is best achieved from partnerships with other organisations, and as part of wider social programmes – an approach central to the new community planning approach.

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