Durham E-Theses

'Active Sports' The First Step to Sporting Excellence?

COOK, GRAHAM,VICTOR

Graham Victor Cook
Title: 'Active Sports': The First Step to Sporting Excellence?
Abstract

The aim of this research was to establish whether the Active Sports initiative (Sport England, 1999a) was an effective vehicle to facilitate progression in young children's involvement in sport from grass roots towards elite performance. The Durham Sport Partnership in the North East of England was used as a case study to examine this. As part of a survey design, varied methodologies including registration forms, questionnaires and interviews were employed to generate qualitative and quantitative data to identify the numbers and profiles of the children and coaches engaged in Active Sports, as well as to compare their interpretation of the quality of their experiences during the Active Sports initiative in providing the first step to sporting excellence. The extent to which the scheme achieved the set equity targets and the influence of the initiative on the sporting involvement of the children were examined, along with the coaches' interpretation of the impact of the scheme on the development of sporting talent. Analysis of the data revealed that participants and coaches found involvement in Active Sport a fulfilling and enjoyable experience that had positive impact on continued sports involvement and professional development respectively. However, the design of the activities and their relationship with any progression to elite sport was found to be questionable, as was the appropriateness of the inclusion of equity targets into an initiative designed to positively impact on elite sport. A significant contributory factor to this was the lack of knowledge the stakeholders had of the initiative, particularly the coaches. The organisation and fundamental structure of the Active Sport initiative in terms of the relationship between what sports the sporting infrastructure is able and willing to offer and what sports young people want to be involved in is questioned, as is the lack of integration of robust talent identification systems in the initiative. The conclusion is therefore drawn that the Active Sports initiative was not an effective vehicle to facilitate the progression in young children's involvement in sport from grass roots towards elite performance.

Title

'Active Sports': The First Step to Sporting Excellence?

Author

Graham Victor Cook

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University of Durham
England

Department of Applied Social Sciences

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Declaration

No material in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Introduction

This thesis examines the extent to which the Active Sports development programme was suitable for the purpose of creating a pathway for children to progress from grassroots sport where individuals acquire basic movement skills to excellence where participants are capable of international competition. The process of enabling this progression through the sports development continuum has been a concern of a series of government-led sports development policies (Sports Council, 1991; Sports Strategy Implementation Group, 2000; Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Strategy Group, 2002). Active Sports forms part of an attempt by policy makers to establish an integrated framework for the development of sport and as such warrants this examination.

Active Sports was one of three interrelated 'Active' programmes established by Sport England as part of the 'Big Picture' in England (Sport England, 2000). It existed from 2000 to 2004 alongside the Active Schools and Active Communities initiatives, with the fundamental aim to provide a comprehensive sports development system throughout England (DCMS, 1999). The Active Sports programme was seen by Sport England as the crucial link between participation (e.g. Active Schools, Active Communities initiatives/programmes) and excellence in sport (Sport England's 'World Class' programme (Sport England, 2000). Active Sports aimed to help young people who have the ability and desire, to improve their skills by giving them increased access to organised sport.

Significantly, this reinforces and facilitates meeting the agendas of successive governments in England to increase participation in sport. Such an agenda is clearly evident and increasingly explicit within documents such as Sport-Raising the Game (Department of National Heritage, 1995) and Labour's Sporting Nation (Labour Party, 1997).

This chapter will begin with an overview of the Active Sports initiative including how it fits with other Sport England sports development programmes. Why this suite of programmes has been introduced will be explained and the partnership structures deemed necessary to deliver Active Sports described. The Active Sports development model will be introduced and links made with existing sports development models and the overall 'Active' framework. Attention will be given to the equity targets that were included in Active Sports and specifically how they were applied to the initiative in the Durham Sport region. The research question that this study intends to answer will be detailed along with the research design employed to address that question. Finally the theoretical perspective of this study will be explained.

The main aim of Active Schools was to increase the general participation levels of young people by 20% in extra-curricular and leisure time sport (DCMS, 1999). As part of this, particular attention was paid to girls' participation in PE and sport. Incentives for schools to do this existed in a number of guises, not least around accreditation programmes for schools called *Sportsmark/Sportsmark Gold* and *Activemark/Activemark Gold*. Such an initiative maintained the link with government policy to extend sporting opportunities, both in curriculum time as well as beyond the school day (DCMS, 1999). Active Communities was also designed to increase and sustain participation in sport as well as promote

continuous improvement in the delivery of sporting opportunities for all communities in

England. It was seen as an initiative which very much built on the former English Sports

Council concept of *Sport for All*.

Significantly, from the point of view of a coherent and progressive approach to the

provision of sporting opportunities, the three Active schemes sat appropriately within the

former Health Education Authority's (now the Health Development Agency) policy

framework of 'Young and Active'(Biddle et al., 1998).

Having established the political and financial support associated with increasing

participation in sport, as well as the important association with other initiatives the focus of

this chapter is now on how the Active Sports programme was implemented. Figure 1

(Appendix A) outlines the organisational structure of a typical Active Sports Partnership.

45 designated Active Sports partnerships were established across England, creating

partnerships between:

- Representatives from National Governing Bodies.

- Local Authorities.

- Local Education Authorities, universities and schools.

- Sports organisations and clubs within the voluntary, commercial and professional

  sectors.

Each Partnership appointed a manager who was responsible for establishing Sport Action

Groups (SAGs) in each of the selected sports. The SAGs were composed of representatives

from each of the partners. Each group was required to develop and implement Sports

Action Plans at a local level, review and deliver the local programmes on an annual basis

and harness the support of Partnership Services.

These Partnership Services included:

- The provision of Sportscoach UK training courses.

- The establishment and maintenance of a coaching database.

- The production and distribution of informative material.

- The appointment of a Coaching and Club Development Officer.

Partnership Services Action Groups were also set up in order to plan and deliver services

for young people, parents, clubs, coaches, officials, development officers and volunteers.

Partnership services had a key role to play in supporting the initiative throughout the

continuum of the Active Sports development model. This model (see Figure 2) consists of

four stages.

Figure 2: The Active Sports Development Model

School PE and extra-curricular programmes						World Class Start

The Active Sports Development Model diagram

- School PE and extra-curricular programmes
- Mini Games
- TOPs programmes
- Community programmes
- Youth clubs

STAGE 1
LOCAL SCHEMES
- Local competition
- Coaching courses

STAGE 2
CLUB DEVELOPMENT
- Regular coaching
- Skills awards
- Competition

STAGE 3
ASSESSMENT
- Assessment days
- Selection process

STAGE 4
DEVELOPMENT SQUADS
- Advanced coaching
- Performance enhancement
- Only limited competition

World Class Start
OR
Similar scheme

Representative sport at county and regional levels
Adult sports clubs and competitions

(Sport England 1999b)

At this point, it is important to understand the nature of the progression through the Active

Sports stages in relation to recognised models of sports development and to locate Active

Sports within these models. The first and simplest sports development continuum model

explains this progression as a hierarchical process from foundation through participation

and performance to excellence (Figure 3) (Hylton et al., 2001).

Figure 3: The Traditional Sports Development Continuum

Excellence

Performance

Participation

Foundation
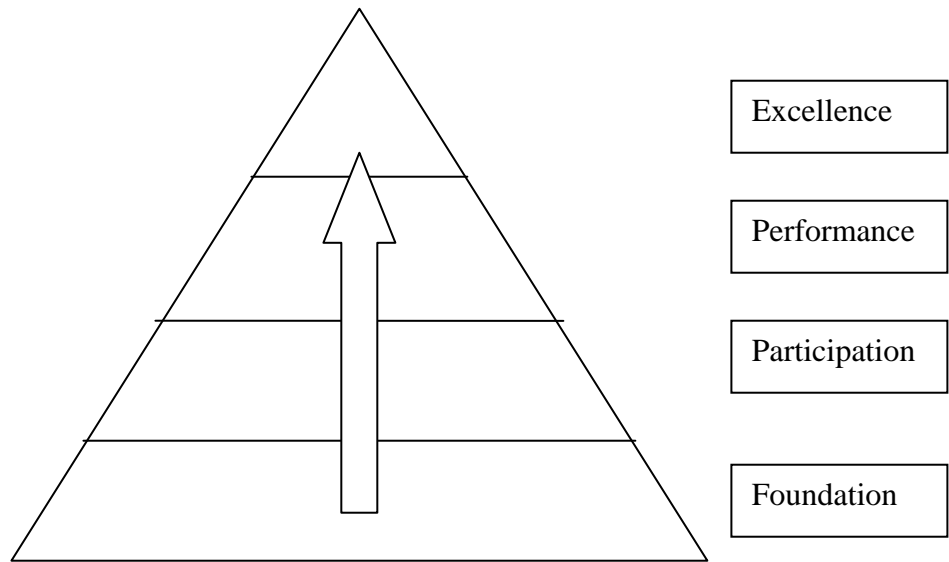
(Hylton et al., 2001, p.3)

Active Sports as an initiative can be placed in the participation/performance levels of the continuum as it caters for participants who have already been introduced into their chosen sport. Stage 1 of the scheme corresponds to the participation level whereas participants at Stage 2 may be placed at either the participation or performance level depending on their involvement and degree of ability. The more advanced nature of stage 3 and 4 activities places them firmly within the performance level of the continuum.

The Traditional Sports Development Continuum is rather restrictive in nature as it only allows for sequential progression between levels. It does not allow for individuals to for example progress directly from foundation to performance as may be the case for a particularly talented child in sports such as swimming or gymnastics. For this reason, Sport

England (2000) published 'The Active Framework' (Figure 4) which better explains the

position of Active Sports within the overall sports development structure.

Figure 4: The Active Framework
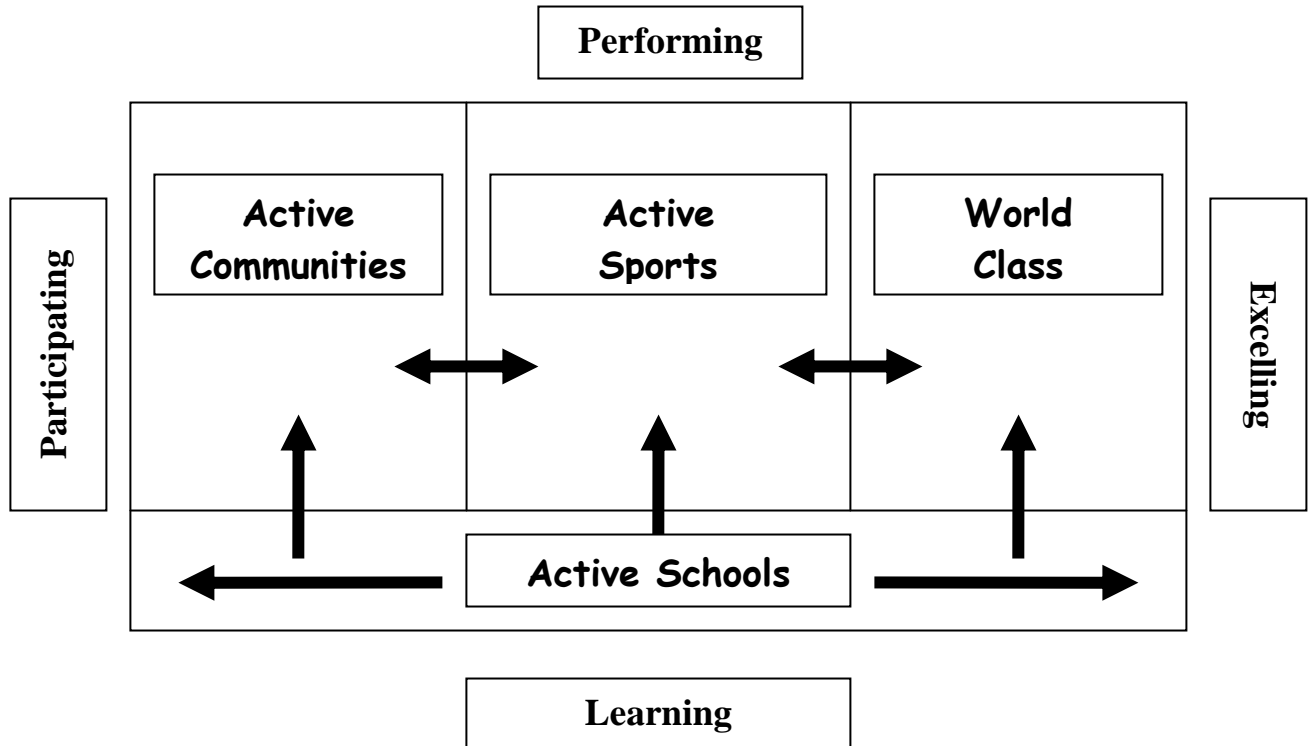
Sport England (2000 p.4)

As the framework shows, progression through the Active initiatives need not be sequential.

For example, it is possible for particularly talented individuals to move directly from

Active Schools at the learning (foundation) level to the World Class initiative at the

excelling (excellence) level and indeed back through the framework to Active

Communities at the participating (participation) level.

A key component of Active Sports was a commitment to ensuring sport equity (see page 35 for definition) within the programme with a view to reducing current inequalities in sport (Sport England, 2000).

The Policy Action Team 10-led report (DCMS, 1999a) presented to the Social Exclusion Unit by the DCMS highlighted that certain groups were at risk of exclusion from mainstream sporting activity. These included females, ethnic minority groups, as well as individuals with disabilities and people from lower socio-economic categories. Consequently, one of the intentions of the research project reported here was to investigate the profile of participants and coaches involved in the initiative, with particular reference to their gender, ethnicity, disabilities and area of residence. This is reinforced further by those attempts to use sport as a tool to address social exclusion, even though sport is no panacea in itself for the problems social exclusion creates (Collins and Kay, 2003). Social exclusion is defined as:

> *'…a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer*
> *from a combination of unemployment, low income, poor housing, high*
> *crime environments, poverty and family breakdown'* (Cabinet Office 1998
> p.5).

The popularity of sport means it is in a favourable position to challenge gender ideologies and therefore an important area in which to encourage involvement (Kay, 2000). Similarly, although sport may not be able to overturn issues of culture and choice affecting participation in sport by people from ethnic minorities, it may challenge constraints of

provision, affordability and access associated with these groups and others from disadvantaged areas (Rowe, 2000). Additionally, sport for disabled individuals receives a high profile and the inclusion of disability issues in youth sport programmes may also help to make sport in general more disability inclusive (Thomas, 2000).

The project also complies with the requirements set out in the report to the DCMS and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) by the Implementation Group responsible for translating into practice the recommendations of 'A Sporting Future for All' (DCMS, 1999) which states that all funded projects must incorporate the monitoring and evaluation of the impact it has on inclusion and equity (Sport Strategy Implementation Group, 2000).

In accordance with guidelines of the Sports Strategy Implementation Group, Sport England set a series of national targets for the Active Sports initiative.

In terms of participation, the national target established was the involvement of at least 300,000 young people in stage 1 by 2003, and of these:

- 50% (150,000) should be girls and young women.
- 10% (30,000) should be from black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities.
- 2% (6,000) should be young people with disabilities, ensuring all disability groups are catered for.
- 40% (120,000) should live in priority areas/disadvantaged communities.

Priority areas were those geographical areas of England identified by Sport England as needing specialist help with Lottery funding. Disadvantaged communities were those identified by the Partnership as requiring special support in the implementation of the Active Sports programmes.

In terms of number and profile of the coaches, the national target was 20,000, of which at least:

- 25% (5,000) should be women.

- 5% (1,000) should come from black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities.

- 2% (400) should be disabled people.

- 30% (6,000) should live in priority areas/disadvantaged communities. (see below)

At a local level, targets were tailored to reflect the demographic profile of each target group (Table 1) within the Durham Sport area. When examining the targets for Durham, it is evident that some exceed those nationally established for each category (e.g. participants and coaches from areas of disadvantage), while others do not (e.g. ethnicity). It would be reasonable to expect a project such as this to take into account the essence of the targets established nationally and adjust them accordingly at a local level. This acknowledges that certain pockets of particular communities exist/do not exist and while these demographics will inevitably change over time, locally, the initiative has to accept this fact and build on that which already exists.

The following table shows a comparison between national and regional equity targets.

Table 1: National and Regional Equity Targets – Disability, Ethnicity and Area of Residence

	Durham Sport Target (Participant)	National Target (Participant)	Durham Sport Target (Coach)	National Target (Coach)
From Priority Area	56%	40%	56%	30%
From Ethnic Minority	1%	10%	1%	5%
With Disability	2%	2%	2%	2%

Adapted from Sport England (1999a)

Area of Residence Targets

The operational area of the Durham Sport Partnership consists of the two unitary authorities of Durham and Darlington, which together have an overall population of 593,430 (2001 census).The partnership covers a large geographical area (243,000 hectares), which in the past has presented issues and problems in terms of equitable access and fair opportunities to participation in physical activity and sport (www.durham.gov.uk) Geographically, 26% of the Durham Sport region is designated as an urban priority area and 68% as a rural priority area, as identified by Sport England (Durham Sport 1999). Reflecting this relatively high population living in areas of social exclusion in Durham and Darlington, Durham Sport revised their targets to 56% for both participants and coaches, compared with a national target of 40% of participants and 30% of coaches (see Table 1).

Ethnic Minority Targets

Within the Durham Sport area, 0.7% (4150) of the population is either from a Black, Asian or other ethnic minority (BEM) background. This BEM population is spread across the partnership, with some localised pockets existing in Darlington (1.5%) and Durham City (1.1%). In view of this, a BEM inclusion target of at least 1% of all coaches and participants was set for Durham Sport. This compares to a national target of 10% of participants and 5% of coaches.

Disability Targets

In terms of disabled people, the demographics of the area were not considered by Sport England to differ from national statistics. Consequently, the target for disabled participants and coaches was set at 2%, reflecting the national figure.

In addition to equity targets based upon regional demographics, the Active Sports initiative also included sport specific gender targets. This was done in recognition of the relative popularity of individual sports to each gender and the current availability of coaches in each sport. The following table details those targets for both participants and coaches.

Table 2: Gender Targets by Sport

	Male %		Female %	
	Participants	Coaches	Participants	Coaches
Hockey	50	70	50	30
Rugby Union	70	70	30	30
Cricket	90	95	10	5
Tennis	60	80	40	20
Rugby League	50	80	50	20
Girls' Football	100	50	0	50
Netball	100	0	100	0
Swimming	50	80	50	20
Athletics	50	70	50	30
Basketball	75	75	25	25

Sport England (1999a)

Each sport, with the exceptions of netball and girls football, which were regarded as essentially gender specific, established a gender target for participation (see Table 2). The target for hockey was set at 50% female, rugby union at least 30% female, cricket at least 10% female and tennis at least 40% female. Similarly, individual targets were set for coaches (see Table 2). The target for hockey and rugby union was at least 30% female, cricket at least 5% female and tennis at least 20% female. These gender targets correspond with national targets set by Sport England. However, it is important to note that all of these percentages are minimum targets and the partnership expressed a commitment to exceed these figures.

Having introduced Active Sports and set the initiative within the context in which it operated, the research question with which this study is concerned and the research design used to address that question will be explained.

The Research Question

As the title of this thesis indicates ('Active Sports' The First Step to Sporting Excellence), the overall objective of the research was to establish if the Active Sports initiative was an effective vehicle for ensuring that young children would progress through a series of pre-determined stages towards elite performance. In order to fulfil this objective and address the research question, several lines of investigation were pursued. The performance of the initiative was evaluated by assessing the numbers and profiles of participants and coaches engaged in the programme and comparing the results with the set targets. This information was utilised in assessing the extent to which the scheme achieved the set equity targets. The participants' experiences of the initiative were considered along with those of the coaches in order to evaluate the quality of those experiences and assess the suitability of the activities in progressing participants through the initiative. Information was also collected regarding the sporting involvement of the participants and the influence of the initiative on that involvement. Finally, the views of the coaches were obtained regarding the potential impact of the scheme, the suitability for purpose of the initiative and their suggestions for improvement of the programme. The combination of the information collected through these lines of investigation was used to address the research question and fulfill the objective of the study.

The research followed a survey design involving the use of registration forms to collect information regarding the numbers and profiles of participants and coaches engaged in Active Sports. Questionnaires and interviews were employed in order to assess the quality of the experience of the initiative and perceived improvements in performance as viewed by the participants and coaches. This strategy of data collection along with the strengths and weaknesses of using such a design will be examined in detail in the methodology chapter of this study.

In concluding this chapter, the theoretical perspective of this study will be explained. The quantitative nature of the initial section of the study followed the positivist paradigm. The epistemology was based on an objectivist view as the knowledge to be gained was hard and real and capable of being transmitted in a tangible form. The ontolology was of an external-realistic nature in that it assumes that the reality to be discovered exists and the researcher and the subjects are independent of one another. A nomethic approach to data collection was used, predominantly through the use and analysis of registration forms and questionnaires. However, as the research developed, it followed an emergent design leading to the use of critical theory paradigm. This was achieved through the use of interviews to examine research avenues that emerged from the initial quantitative data. Finally, the research followed a critical theory paradigm, which recognised that there are multiple interpretations of reality and examined the influences of social, political, cultural, ethnic, gender and disability on the construction of these interpretations.

As qualitative data was produced, the opinions of participants and coaches was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme in the provision of playing and coaching opportunities, the quality of those opportunities and the impact of the scheme in providing the first step to sporting excellence.

This chapter is followed by a detailed review of the relevant existing literature pertaining to all areas of investigation in the study. The methodology of the research design and how it was used to follow those lines of investigation and ultimately address the research question is then presented and evaluated. This leads into the presentation of the results obtained through the employment of this methodology and those results are then discussed in detail. This discussion forms the basis of the conclusions drawn by this study along with the recommendations that emerge from those conclusions.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Literature Review

This chapter explores that literature which offers an overview and understanding of sport policy in England from the mid 1990s in relation to participation and performance. Particular attention will be paid to the issues that have influenced the introduction of Active Sports as a vehicle for the development of sport. These issues may be related to sport or form part of the widening participation agenda to which sport and physical activity contribute. The areas focused upon include those of increasing participation, enhancement of elite sport, health and the social inclusion of particular target groups such as girls, disabled people, ethnic minorities and those living in areas of deprivation. Particular barriers and facilitators to participation within these groups will be examined as will family influence on participation and sporting preferences of children in England in order to understand the background to the current sporting involvement of children. As the establishment of development squads is a specific stage in the Active Sports model, the literature concerned with talent identification will also be examined. Finally, Active Sports impact studies carried out during the life of the initiative will be considered. The information included in this chapter will later be used to inform the discussion regarding the effectiveness of Active Sports in providing participants with the first step to sporting excellence.

The public health concern over the damaging effects of sedentary lifestyles associated with young people is growing (Fulton et al., 2004). Increasing participation in sport and physical activity is particularly important as many believe this participation tracks from childhood to adolescence and on into adulthood (Malina, 1996; Telama et al., 2005). Consequently,

Government in England sees the promotion of sport and physical activity and young

peoples' involvement in it in a variety of contexts as a priority area (DCMS Strategy Unit,

2002). One of many initiatives that emerged to engage and promote such participation in

sport was 'Active Sports' (Sport England, 2000). This initiative was designed with the

apparent intention of increasing young peoples' involvement in sport and as such it is

worth questioning at the outset the notion of what sport is. The Council of Europe's

European Sports Charter (1992) offers the following definition.

> *Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or*
>
> *organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness*
>
> *and mental well being, forming relationships or obtaining results in*
>
> *competitions at all levels* (Council of Europe, 1992: p.3).

This definition is extremely broad, to the point of being meaningless, encompassing all

forms of physical activity that enhance physical, psychological and social well being. Seen

very much as the first step en route to excellence in performance sport, Active Sports was a

National Lottery funded five year development programme (1999-2004) in England. It was

designed to target, promote and enhance participation by young people in nine targeted

sports: athletics, basketball, cricket, girls' football, hockey, netball, rugby union, swimming

and tennis. The activities included within the Active Sports initiative are therefore

compatible with the Council of Europe's definition of sport. However, whether these were

the most appropriate sports to select will be debated later when addressing young people's

involvement in the design and planning of the initiative and their subsequent participation.

The case study presented here focuses on the Active Sports initiative delivered by Durham Sport in the North East region of England. Durham Sport is a pioneering regional partnership, initially established in 1996 as an informal pilot project to enhance the development of sport in the Durham area. It was the first such partnership to be established in the country and the first to submit an Active Sports bid. The partnership consisted of 9 district councils, the University of Durham and governing bodies of sport and by 1998 it had developed into a formal partnership funded by Sport England, with a portion of its remit to deliver Active Sports. Durham Sport selected five of the identified sports (cricket, hockey, netball, rugby union and tennis) for inclusion in the first year of the scheme and later included the other four sports (athletics, basketball, girls' football and swimming) plus rugby league, which was later added to the initiative by Sport England.

Durham University was commissioned by Durham Sport to carry out the monitoring and evaluation of the Active Sports initiative in the Durham region. The monitoring process was required in order to assess the effectiveness of the initiative in achieving specific targets set by Sport England. According to Coalter (2006):

> *Monitoring is the regular, systematic, collection and analysis of*
> *information related to a planned and agreed programme of action. This*
> *provides evidence of the extent to which the programme is being delivered*
> *as intended, meeting its targets and making progress towards the*
> *achievement of its objectives* (p.9).

In this respect, the process undertaken to monitor Active Sports in the Durham Sport Region appears to comply with this definition.

The evaluation process within Active Sports also required a study of the programme asking have changes occurred as a result of the Active Sports initiative? which is a common area of investigation in evaluation (Long, 2008). Coalter (2006) offers the following definition of the evaluation process:

> *Evaluation is the process of undertaking a systematic and objective examination of monitoring information in order to answer agreed questions and make judgements on the basis of agreed criteria. Concerns may relate to the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of an organisation or programme. The intention is not simply to assess what impacts have occurred, but why, what lessons can be learnt and how the programme might be improved* (p.9).

Evaluation as a process may therefore need to draw on a range of different kinds of research in order to gather the required information to answer the questions and make judgements (Long, 2008). In this case, a range of survey methods including registration forms, questionnaires and interviews were used to gather the necessary information to effectively monitor and evaluate the Active Sports initiative.

Evaluation as a method of examining the effectiveness of sporting initiatives has recently been a popular measurement tool with the Sports Councils (Coalter, 2002, 2006; Sport

England, 2001a) in attempting to ascertain if a change has occurred as a result of a sports

development intervention. In this respect, Active Sports is no exception and in accordance

with Coalter's (2002) assertion that any evaluation exercise should be conducted against

the aims of the project, this became the focus of this monitoring and evaluation process.

The government's need for this monitoring and evaluation is not surprising in view of the

substantial sums of public money invested in sport. The willingness to invest considerable

sums of government controlled money to improve elite sporting achievement is evident in

government's attempts to increase participation and improve performance (see figure 2,

p.18). £120 million has been spent establishing elite sport institutes and approximately

£100 million supporting elite athletes between 1996 and 2000 (Green, 2005). The origins of

such a commitment can be traced back to the Conservative Government and the publication

of *Sport: Raising the Game* (Department of National Heritage, 1995). This was the first

government sport policy statement to be produced in two decades and it concentrated on

the development of youth sport and excellence. The Labour Party's subsequent policy

document *A Sporting Future for All* perpetuated the commitment to see more people of all

ages and social groups taking part in sport and more success for top competitors and teams

in international competition *(*DCMS, 2000).

Sport England's model (Figure 2) is an attempt to illustrate the progressive pathway

through the continuum from grass roots participation through more structured performance

and competition to potential excellence. The four stages of the Active Sports initiative

begin with stage 1 which consists of local competitions and coaching courses designed to

introduce young people into more advanced instruction in their chosen sport than that

provided in schools. Stage 2 of the initiative involves integrating children into the junior section of local clubs where they receive regular ongoing coaching and take part in organised competition in addition to that experienced in school. An assessment and selection process takes place at stage 3, culminating in the selection of development squads in which the best athletes receive advanced coaching. At this stage elite performers will be identified for inclusion in World Class Start or an equivalent programme where they will be supported to reach their full athletic potential.

An integral and fundamental element of the Active Sports initiative was that each sport was assigned individualised equity targets in relation to the participants as well as the coaches. These targets revolved around achieving certain numbers in relation to disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic area of residence (Table 1) and gender (Table 2). Regardless of the extent and nature of evidence to support or reject the relationship between leisure/sporting activities and positive influences on social exclusion, it remains a strong belief in government policy that participation in culture and leisure activities is *"a powerful influence …… on social exclusion"* (DCMS, 2001: 8).

The government's apparent quest for sports equity is emphasised in Sport England's guidance for National Governing Body equity plan formulation:

> *Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising equalities and taking steps to address them. It is about changing the structure of sport to ensure that it becomes equally accessible to all members of society, whatever their age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality or socio-economic status* (Sport England, 2001: 4).

However, this kind of equity in sport is far from a reality in sport or society, despite the efforts of the original *Sport for All* campaign of the early 1970s and subsequent initiatives designed to promote sports participation for everyone inclusive of ethnic minorities, disabled people and those from low economic backgrounds (Rowe, 2004; Sport England, 1999).

Some authors have the view that although equality of opportunity is a crucial component in creating a fairer society, it is unlikely to materialise in a capitalist system (Hargreaves, 1986). Despite support from past and present participation trends however, the notion of a need for equity is not accepted by all. LeGrand (1991) reinforces an illusionary, inappropriate and immoral view of equity. Clarke (1994) similarly contends that equity must be less of a priority than efficiency, economy and effectiveness, which indicates that its prominence in a performance led initiative, may be less than appropriate. Whatever the perspective, it remains that equity targets were an integral part of the Active Sports initiative. Consequently, it is important to examine why this was the case.

Sport England's equity statement indicated a continued commitment to deliver sports

equity, regardless of its potentially limited prospects. More recently, this commitment has

been further reinforced by the publication of *The Equality Standard: A Framework for*

Sport (Sport England 2004). *The Equality Standard* was produced by Sport England in

conjunction with Sport Scotland, the Sports Council for Wales, the Sports Council for

Northern Ireland and UK Sport to provide direction on equality for sporting organisations

across the UK. Within the *Standard* there are four equality levels to which organisations

can aspire. These levels are foundation, preliminary, intermediate and advanced each

containing three increasingly challenging outcomes to be achieved by completing key tasks

(p. 9). The *Standard* broadly defines equality as:

> *the state of being equal – treating people equally, which is not necessarily*
>
> *the same as treating them the same. In some cases the need for equality*
>
> *may require unequal effort to ensure that the principle of equality is*
>
> *achieved* (p.20).

So, what are the reasons for such a commitment?

Before considering the motivations of Sport England to include participant equity targets in

the Active Sports initiative, the reasons for the commitment to equitably recruit coaches to

the scheme will be examined.

In a survey of 43 sports, research by Mori (2004) reported that there were 1.2 million

coaches in the UK. Of these 76% were male and 24% female indicating a considerable

under representation of female coaches. This situation does seem to be improving with

more recent research by North (2006) revising these figures to 62% male and 38% female.

The author does, however, express caution over the accuracy of these figures, citing

findings of the as yet unpublished work by Sports Coach UK as 74% male and 26% female.

The Mori study (2004) identified 19% of coaches as receiving payment which due to the

attempts of Sports Coach UK to professionalise the coaching system has risen to 30%

(Townend, 2007). Similarly, those coaches holding formal qualifications have increased

from 38% in 2004 to 50% in 2006. In terms of the social class profile of coaches in the UK,

Mori (2004) report that 70% of all coaches are from social class A, B, and C1 which

account for 55% of the population and 30% from social class D and E. The same study

concludes that 92% of coaches are white and 8% from an ethnic minority. Townend (2007)

further reports that 10% of coaches have a disability from a group in society representing

22% of the overall population.

Although these reports suggest that the general trend is towards a more demographically

professional and socially inclusive coaching workforce in the UK, the most recent findings

from Loughborough University still shows concern regarding the social exclusion of

coaches. This research commissioned by Sportnation, a national sport think tank chaired by

Steve Cram suggests that in relying on a voluntary coaching structure some groups are

being socially excluded from coaching in the UK. These groups are identified as females,

non-whites and those from less affluent sectors of society, and the report concludes that

they are excluded because only self selecting groups can afford to give up the time to participate in coaching (Kay et al., 2008).

Considering the continued concerns expressed in the Loughborough study and the fact that Active Sports coaches were to be paid and given the opportunity to pursue a suite of personal development courses, it seems appropriate that coach equity targets were included in the initiative.

The reasons for the inclusion of participation equity targets will now be considered.

Gender Equity

Historically, females have experienced greater difficulty than males accessing sporting environments, as a consequence of the development of modern sports in line with the assumptions, values and ideologies of males, maleness and masculinity (Dunning, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Kidd, 1987; Maguire, 1986; Messner, 1990). The Victorians subjected sport to a process of organisation and standardisation driven by the male dominated institutions such as public schools, universities, churches and private clubs (Dunning, 2004). Such developments took place within a broader context of social structures and gender relations which emphasised the superiority of men in society and accepted the marginalisation of females and dominance of men in sport as the natural order of things (Dunning, 1999; Theberg, 1985; Hargreaves, 1994). Consequently, females who wished to take part were unable to participate in sports and games as much as males. This amounts to sexual discrimination and, as Tannsjo (2000 p. 101) contends "If sexual discrimination is objectionable in most other areas of our lives, why should it be acceptable within sports?"

The historical opposition to female participation in sport was based on a biological argument. Strenuous physical activity was seen as detrimental to the overall physical development of females and socially they were expected to adopt a supporting role to males. When females participate in sports, their performance is often undervalued (Coakley, 1998). Coakley refers to this male dominance in sport as 'gender logic'. It is characterised by negatively orientated statements such as he or she threw, ran or jumped 'like a girl' when the performance was poor and is potentially damaging to female sports participation (Coakley, 1998). These negative values still exist and impact on early sporting experiences of females which greatly influence future participation (Cockburn, 2002; Oliver, 2001; Hall, 1996; Institute of Youth Sport, 1999). Indeed, by the time both girls and boys enter secondary school, their preferences for particular sports and their physical activity patterns are firmly established. These early experiences of sport and physical activity often occur within the school setting and it is therefore crucial that they are of a positive and enjoyable nature (Kirk, 2004; Mountjoy et al., 2008).

Early socialisation and exposure to sport means males are more likely to be skilled and, as a result to have higher levels of self confidence and willingness to use their bodies in active ways. Girls, however, are more likely to accept the notion that boys are physically superior (Coakley, 2001). It is important to note here that some boys also have negative early experiences of sport and that much of the research into girls, sport and physical activity has concentrated on their apparent exclusion from a male dominated sporting environment (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Scraton, 1990; Scraton, 1992). This gives the false impression that all boys benefit from sport and all girls are excluded (Butler, 1993; Segal, 1997), whereas

both males and females can experience the constraining and enabling features of the sport experience (Maguire, 2002). Indeed, there is evidence that a minority of girls develop their athleticism and exhibit a sense of pride and accomplishment grounded in their physical competency (Coakley, 1999; Theberg, 2003). In addition, it is important to understand that what appear to be established definitions of masculinity and femininity are actually constantly being contested, re-evaluated and modified by a society that itself is full of tension and undergoing a process of continual change (Messner, 1990; Willis, 1994). The concept of hegemony i.e. male dominance of sport, has been used to explain the way in which traditional sporting beliefs and attitudes are opposed and defended, while new meanings are formulated and supported in a continual process of change (Hargreaves, 1986).The notion of gender is therefore continually created and recreated through time by the process of socialisation (Coakley, 1998; Lorber, 1994). A combination of the influence of the family, peers, teachers, coaches and role models (Biskup, 1999) results in the development of strong and long lasting concepts of gender roles (Sharpe, 1994).

Accepting that gender differences of opportunities exist within sporting contexts, what are the issues that policy makers claim to provide justification for the continued attempt to redress the equity balance through initiatives such as Active Sports? The first of these issues is the potential health benefits of participation in sport and physical activity.

Important Health Benefits

The potential health related benefits for males and females of regular participation in sport and physical activity are well documented (WHO, 1995). Similarly, the financial burden of

sedentary lifestyles and consequent chronic health conditions are reported as considerable (Waddington, 2000). For example, Pratt (2000) estimates the cost to the American economy at $150 billion per year. The benefits include reduced risks of developing certain diseases, increased life expectancy and quality of life as well as psychological benefits (Sallis, 1999). In addition, childhood and adolescent sports participation has been found to be a significant predictor of young adults' participation in sports and physical fitness activities (Malina, 2001; Perkins, 2004). Significantly, a study of 7794 subjects in Finland by Tammelin et al. (2003) reported that participation in sport at least once a week among females and twice a week among males was associated with high levels of physical activity in later life. This view must however be balanced against studies (Sallis, 2000a; Telama, 1997; Bradley, 2000) that identify a noticeable decline in physical activity through adolescence and that being forced or encouraged to exercise during childhood can actually decrease the likelihood of continued activity during adulthood (Malina, 1996; Taylor, 1999). Because Active Sports is aimed at young people who already participate in sport, it is debatable whether there will be any subsequent increase in long term sport and physical activity participation resulting from involvement in the Active Sports initiative, although any health and economic benefits of such an increase would be welcomed by government.

Physical Activity Recommendations and Patterns

It is recommended that all young people aged 5-18 years should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour per day (Biddle, 1998) and this is supported by the Chief Medical Officers report regarding the impact of physical activity on health (Department of Health, 2004). Children who participate in Active Sports sessions in

addition to existing school and free time activities are more likely to achieve this

recommendation. However, the 2002 Health Survey for England presents some varied

activity patterns of children and young people, particularly females (Proston & Primatesta,

2003) including:

- Although participation in sports and exercise activities were similar for both sexes
  between the ages of 5 and 10 years, 59% of boys and 55% of girls participated for at
  least 15 minutes on at least one day.

- 16% of boys and 10% of girls took part in sport and exercise on 5 or more days a
  week.

- In the 11-15 years group, 66% of boys participated in some form of sport and exercise
  for at lest 15 minutes on at least one day per week compared to 57% of girls.

- At least 50% of females aged 15 years and 43% aged 12 years did not participate in
  any active sport on a weekly basis.

As Active Sports is aimed at children who already have an interest in sport and have

expressed a wish to develop their talent through further activity it is unlikely that the

initiative will have a major positive impact on recruitment of young people to new sports or

persuade those who do not participate at present to become involved.

Female Benefits of Lifelong Participation

In the specific case of females only and in most cases males as well, evidence suggests that

sport and physical activity throughout the lifespan may have positive impacts in a number

of ways. These include a reduction in incidence of diabetes and an enhanced ability to

metabolise fat for energy (Malina, 1991) increased HDL (good cholesterol) levels

(Haddock, 1998; Kendig, 1998), as well as a reduced risk of the development of chronic

diseases such as cancer, coronary heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and osteoporosis in

later life (Sabo, 2004; Depris, 1990; Freedman, 2001; Pope, 2003; Kanus, 1999).

Childhood Obesity

 In addition, childhood obesity is on the increase throughout the world and this is

particularly the case amongst girls living in urban areas (WHO, 1997). In England, 16.7%

of girls aged 2-15 years are classified as obese (Department of Health, 2005) and in

America the situation is similar, with 1 in 6 girls reported as being obese or overweight

(National Center for Health Statistics, 2002). Significantly, research suggests that sport and

physical activity can play an important role in weight control programmes for females

(Gutin, 2004; Jakicic, 2003).

Smoking

Athletic participation has also been shown to have a positive impact on adolescent

substance use by both boys and girls. In the case of smoking, research by Escobedo et al.

(1993) shows that athletic participation helps to reduce smoking among girls with those

who played at least one sport being 40% less likely to smoke regularly and 50% less likely

to smoke heavily. The findings of this study are supported by Page (1998), Aaron (1995)

and Zill (1995).

Alcohol

Research on the relationship between youth sport and alcohol consumption is less clear.

Some studies show that female sports participation is associated with drinking (Hildebrand,

2001; Leichliter, 1998; Nelson, 2001; Thombs, 2000), while others do not (Carr, 1996;

Higgs, 2001; Page, 1998; Pate, 2000). Some authors contend that athletes drink to reduce

stress and pain (Heyman, 1996; Leichliter, 1998; Miller, 2002), drink to celebrate a win or

console a loss (Heyman, 1996); Holman, 1997; Slater, 1996) or that athletes are subject to

environments that foster a drinking culture (Nelson, 2001; Thombs, 2000). The consensus

of opinion is, however, that the link between sport and drinking is stronger for male

athletes than female athletes (Aaron et al., 1995; Carr et al., 1996).

Psychological Benefits

Research also suggests that the potential benefits to females of participation in sport and

physical activity are not limited to those of a physical nature. Numerous studies have

reported improved psychological well being and reductions in problematic levels of anxiety

and depression as a consequence of regular participation (Dimeo, 2001; Martinsen, 1994;

Hassmen, 2000; Taylor, 2004; Singer, 1992). Furthermore, there is considerable evidence

that adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to these conditions (Nolen-Hoeksema,

1994; Cyranowskim, 2000).

Intellectual Development

In terms of the contribution of sport and physical activity to intellectual development and academic achievement of girls, there are a range of studies that conclude that an increase in participation in sport can improve academic performance in both boys and girls (Sallis, 1999a; Shephard, 1997; Sabo, 1989; Fejgin, 1994; Hanson, 1998; Hanson, 1999; Marsh, 2003). This is presumed to be facilitated by a number of factors including:

- Increased energy from enhanced fitness levels.

- Productive diversion resulting from time away from the classroom.

- Reduced disruptive behaviour in school.

- Improved cognitive functioning as a result of increased cerebral blood flow or improvement of brain neurotransmitters.

- A relationship between mental and motor skills and increased self-esteem (Etnier, 1997; Lindner, 1999).

However, because of a lack of standardised measurement within the relevant research, the evidence for a positive causal relationship between physical activity/sport and academic achievement is speculative (Sallis, 1999a). This research by Sallis (1999a) also showed that increased school time physical education and sport does not impair academic performance and Ofsted inspections of specialist Sports Colleges in England have revealed apparent early indications that academic achievement has improved since their introduction in 1998 (Ofsted and the Youth Sport Trust, 2000).

Gender and Social Inclusion

The concept of social inclusion or 'social closure' (which includes social exclusion) as it was then referred to began with the sociologist Max Weber and was developed by Parkin (1979) who identified several characteristics on which social closure might be based including gender, education, ethnicity, religion and disability.

Social inclusion or the elimination of social exclusion has become a priority of successive governments (Micklewright, 2002) and this is no less evident under the New Labour administration. As White and Rowe (2000: 6) note: *"The commitment of the government to sport as a means to achieve wider social policy objectives has never been so focused and received such high profile"*. Bailey (2004) contends that sport has the potential to reduce exclusion by providing the opportunity for individuals from different social backgrounds to participate in a common interest and acquire new competencies. Although this in turn develops a sense of belonging to a team, club or programme, creates social networks and enhances community cohesion, the provision of these opportunities is no guarantee that they will be taken up. If however these opportunities are exploited girls' participation in sport can challenge and potentially change established social norms about their roles and capabilities (Brady, 2002). However, in reality, sport not only reflects, but contributes to girls' social exclusion in sport and wider society through the emphasis on the value of masculinity to success (Collins, 2003).

Barriers and Facilitators to Female Participation

Given that sport and physical activity provide these benefits, what are the factors that influence the participation of young females?

There is a wealth of evidence reporting that young females do not participate in sufficient sport and physical activity for them to reap the physical and psychological rewards of these benefits (Trost, 2002; Saxena, 2002) and that there is a clear trend of decreasing levels of activity as girls get older (Kemper, 1994; Sport England, 2002). Several factors have been suggested that may influence girls' participation in sport and physical activity and these fall into two main categories of personal factors and environmental factors. Within the first category, influences may be sub-divided into biological factors such as heredity, age (Van Mechelen, 1985), obesity, fitness levels (Sallis, 1995) and psychological factors including motivation (Biddle, 1999), perceived barriers (Sallis, 2000), perceived competence (Carroll, 2001), self-esteem (Weiss, 2001) and attitudes (Kremer, 1997). Similarly, the latter category may be split into social influences such as peer group pressure (Flintoff, 2001), family attitude (Moore, 1991), cultural factors (Greendorfer, 2002) and the influence of role models (Vescio, 2003) and environmental factors including access to facilities (Sallis 1995), type of activity available (Faucette, 1995) and independent mobility (Hillman, 1990).

This section has highlighted the considerable evidence to indicate the benefits of increased female participation in sport and physical activity whilst at the same time acknowledging

the factors that influence that participation. This emphasis on females is because they were a target group of the Active Sports initiative. However, it remains open to debate whether including challenging overall gender targets of 50% female participants (150,000) and 25% female coaches (5,000) in the Active Sports initiative was appropriate in achieving the overall goal of improving excellence in English sport is open to question (Sport England, 2000).

Disability Equity

Equity targets regarding participation by disabled young people and coaches were also included the Active Sport framework. Nationally, 2% of participants (6000) and coaches (400) were to be individuals with a disability (Table 1) and it was necessary for all disability groups to be included (Sport England, 2000).

Historically, society's attitude towards disabled members of the community has been one of 'out of sight and out of mind' with large numbers of disabled people living in closed institutions. Advances in medicine saw the formulation of the 'medical model' which viewed disability as a pathological event requiring medical treatment and rehabilitation and that those with disabilities should adapt to fit in with a largely non-disabled society (Oliver, 1996). Proponents of this medical model suggest that disability is the presence of physical or cognitive differences that deviate negatively from the 'mundane' norm (Harris, 2000).

More recently, the 'social model' of disability which regards many disabled people's circumstances as partly determined by social structures, policies and disabling attitudes has

emerged (West, 1984). Indeed, in a direct challenge to Harris (2000) Reindal (2000) and Newell (1999) both argue that the importance of physical difference lies solely in the discriminatory social reaction to or ignorance of the effects of that difference. This shift towards a social definition of disability, along with the success of British paralympic athletes has helped to facilitate improved organisation of disabled people as participants, coaches, administrators and volunteers, as well as an enhanced public profile and increased awareness of disability issues in sport (Beresford, 1996; Houlihan, 2002). It must however be noted that the disability definition debate continues with attempts being made to emphasise the commonalities of the respective models in order to promote concentrated discussion on specific disagreements (Koch, 2001).

Although the profile of sport for the disabled is higher than at any other time, the concept is not new. As far back as 1888, the first sports club for the deaf was established in Berlin and by 1924 formal international competition in deaf sports began with the Paris *Silent Games* (http://www.deaflympics.com/about). Sport for physically disabled people developed from rehabilitation of injured service members and civilians after the Second World War. In 1944 Sir Ludwigg Guttman founded the spinal injuries centre at Stoke Mandeville Hospital and four years later the first Stoke Mandeville Games for wheelchair athletes, which later evolved into the modern Paralympic Games, took place (http://www.parasport.org.uk). Sport for intellectually disabled people did not begin to develop until the 1960s when the Special Olympics movement was formed. This originated in 1962 from a series of summer camps organised by founder and honorary chairperson Eunice Kennedy Shriver and resulted in the first international Special Olympics held in Chicago in 1968 (http://www.specialolympics.org).

A wide range of sports that have been adapted for disabled people and several sports exist which are unique to disabled sports. The English Federation of Disability Sports (2001) has twelve priority sports which are athletics, basketball, boccia, cricket, football, hockey, netball, rugby union, swimming, table tennis and tennis. Interestingly, nearly all of the sports involved in the Active Sports initiative appear in this list with the exception of rugby league indicating a strong similarity in policy priorities between able and non-able bodied sport.

Sport and physical activity can contribute significantly to the well-being and socialisation of children and adolescents with intellectual and functional disabilities (Coppernolle, 1996; Morisbak, 1995; Kristen, 2002). However, past research has determined that the structure and organisation of sport, inadequacies in the physical environment and the attitude of service providers can serve to inhibit the opportunities for participation in sport by young disabled people (DePauw, 1997; Taub, 2000).

A survey commissioned by Sport England in 2000 of 2293 children aged 6-16 years with a limiting disability or illness (Finch, 2001) found that although the majority of young disabled people do participate in P.E. lessons, they are far less likely to participate in extra-curricular or out of school sports. The survey reported that only 16% of the sample population had taken part in extra-curricular sport compared with 45% of the general sample of young people and only 47% of young disabled people had taken part in sport at the weekend compared with 74% of the overall sample of young people.

Barriers to participation found in Finch's (2001) survey were duplicated in research

commissioned by Sport Scotland (Scott Porter Research and Marketing, 2001) and

included internal barriers such as feeling different from the majority of the population,

unable to fit in, self consciousness or lack of confidence and a fear of failure. External

barriers were reported as lack of information, lack of physical and emotional support, lack

of appropriate facilities, transport problems, financial constraints, attitudes of others and

lack of time.

As Active Sports did not include specific provision for the development of disabled athletes

to excellence, the inclusion of disability targets in an initiative designed to contribute to the

development of elite sport is open to question. Sport is segregated according to the

existence of disability with separate competitions and modified rules that recognise the

needs of particular athletes. Specific initiatives for disabled athletes would cater more

effectively for those needs.

Ethnicity Equity

The Active Sports targets for the inclusion of people from Black and ethnic minority

(BEM) communities were 10% (30,000) for participants and 5% (1,000) for coaches (Sport

England, 2000) which reflected national demographics and the current number of coaches

from this group. However, in view of the particular demographics of the Durham Sport

region, these figures were amended to 1% for both groups (Table 1).

Government commitment through Sport England to promote racial equality in and through sport has been evident since the conception of 'Sport for All' in the early 1970's and by the mid 1990's, the problem still remained.

As the Sports Council stated:

> *In sport individuals and organisations discriminate against black and ethnic minority people. There are others who unintentionally discriminate, mainly because they fail to acknowledge how racial inequalities, cultural variance and their own organisational behaviour restrict equal opportunities. Because many people in sport have understood racism to consist of overt and deliberate forms of discrimination, more subtle and unintentional racism is not even detected.*
> (Sports Council, 1994 p.17).

There are however contradicting views regarding the impact of sport on equitable inclusion of ethnic minorities in society. Jarvie (1991) sees sport as a vehicle for racial discrimination either through institutionalised racism or through a racist culture attached to a particular sport, whereas Carrington (1998) concludes that sport is an ideal arena in which to challenge racism and promote social inclusion. In an attempt to capitalise on the latter view, Sport England in partnership with the Commission for Racial Equality established Sporting Equals in 1998. This initiative was designed to promote racial equality by creating a framework for governing bodies and national sports organisations to establish robust

inclusive policies and culminated in the publication of *Achieving Racial Equality: A Standard for Sport* (Commission for Racial Equality, 2000).

The commitment of government to enforce this *Standard* is evidenced by the statement of Trevor Brooking, the then chair of Sport England who said:

> *Sport England expects all sporting organisations to put policies,*
> *procedures and plans in place to tackle racism and promote racial*
> *equality. Those sports that do not meet the Preliminary Level of the*
> *Standard in the future will have their funding reviewed.*
> (Sporting Equals 2002, no page).

The preliminary level referred to here is the first of three stages of achievement (preliminary, intermediate and advanced) and requires organisations to make a public commitment to equality, develop policies and procedures and undertake ethnic monitoring (Long et al., 2005). Interestingly however, the more outcome orientated objectives of the intermediate and advanced levels of the Racial Equality Standard, which include increasing participation rates were never similarly linked to funding (Spracklen et al., 2006).

The need for this framework and the apparent reason for the inclusion of ethnicity targets in the Active Sports initiative are illustrated by the disparity between sports participation rates between ethnic minorities and the general population.

Young people aged 6-16 from some BEM communities are less likely to take part in sport on both a casual and regular basis than their white counterparts and the trend between 1999 and 2002 was for this disparity to increase (Sport England, 2002). This research by Sport England measures participation according to a Sports Equity Index that provides an indication of which groups in the population are participating above and below expectation. The report shows that generally young people from BEM communities participate 17% less than the norm casually and 28% less on a regular basis and that this trend applies across all key stages. This coupled with national demographics which show that ethnic minorities make up 7.9% (4.6 million) of the population as a whole and have a younger age structure than the white population indicates the apparent level of this under participation. (http://www.statistics.gov.uk). There are, however, differences in participation patterns among ethnic groups. A study by Rowe and Champion (2000) found that Black Carribean (39%), Indian (39%), Pakistani (31%) and Bangladeshi (30%) communities participated in sport less than the national average of 46%. In contrast, the Black Other group (60%) far exceeded this average. This would suggest that blanket targets for participation by BEM populations may at best facilitate misleading results and at worst further disadvantage the lowest participating ethnic groups.

Research by Ploszajski Lynch Consulting (2005) shows that there is no single reason but a complex set of circumstances that serve to disadvantage people from ethnic minorities in sport. These include poverty and deprivation, which has been estimated to socially exclude 57% of people from BEM communities from sport, suggesting that this exclusion is primarily the result of economic hardship. A lack of ethnic role models and the existence of a white sporting establishment with very little involvement by BEM individuals in the

organisation and governance of sport are also identified as contributory factors. In addition, cultural traditions have been identified as powerful barriers to participation amongst people from BEM communities (Rai and Finch, 1997; Carroll, 1993). These cultural barriers include:

- Modesty, particularly for Muslim girls whose religion stipulates that women are not to take part in most forms of sport (Carroll and Hollinshead, 1993).

- Ramadan, which involves fasting with associated lack of energy (Carroll, 1993).

- Negative attitude of parents towards sport (Lyons, 1990).

- Lack of cultural understanding of teachers towards children (Carroll and Hollinshead, 1993).

- No perceived value in sport compared to other aspects of life such as academic achievement, earning a living and family commitments (Sport Scotland, 2001).

Nevertheless, despite the introduction of racial equality policies, the inclusion of equity targets in national initiatives such as Active Sports, and research highlighting the barriers to sports participation by ethnic minorities, recent research by Spracklen et al (2006) states that:

> *Despite greater attention to racial equality in sport in recent years, the*
> *progress of national sports organisations towards creating equality of*
> *outcomes has been limited in the United Kingdom.*
> (p. 289).

It would seem reasonable to expect that all things being equal, an initiative such as Active

Sports would attract participants from groups in society that mirror the demographics of the

region. However, the small percentage of people from BEM communities (1%) in the

Durham Sport area and the fact that these groups tend to be found in particular 'pockets'

within the region (www.durham.gov.uk) means that even this modest target may be

difficult to achieve.

Socio-economic Equity

Historically, societies have always recognised hierarchical structures within them (Coalter,

2007). Perceptions of individual power, wealth, prestige, ability, education, occupation and

area of residence, which is the focus of this section of the study, have led to varied systems

of social classification.

> *The term social class originally referred to groups of people holding*
>
> *similar roles in the economic processes of production and exchange, such*
>
> *as landowner or tenant, employer or employee. Such positions correspond*
>
> *to different levels of status, prestige, and access to political power, but*
>
> *social class eventually took on a more generic meaning and came to refer*
>
> *to all aspects of a person's rank in the social hierarchy.*
>
> (McDowell, 2002, p. 10).

There is however a continuing sociological debate regarding the very existence of a

stratified social class system and the evidence for the influence it may have on sport and

leisure activities is not clear cut. Sociologists have nevertheless developed a continuum of

scales and schemas to measure and categorise individuals within a class based society.

From David Treiman's Prestige Scale (Treiman, 1977) through Erik Olin Wright's Class

Structure (Wright, 1979) to The Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification Scale

(Stewart, 1980) and John Goldthorpe's Class Schema (Goldthorpe, 1997), sociologists

have attempted to explain social stratification.

When applied to sport and physical activity, authors such as Roberts argue that members of

all social strata do similar things in their leisure time and it is only the amount that is

dictated by class (Roberts, 1999). This is supported by studies that show that the higher a

person's class, the more likely the individual is to be both a sports participant and a

spectator (Erickson, 1996; Hughes, 1983; Nixon, 1996; Scholsberg, 1987; Wilson, 2002;

Bourdieu, 1991; Coakley, 1998; Leonard, 1998) and by Brodersen et al. (2005) who found

sedentary behaviour to be greater in 11 and 12 year old children from more deprived

backgrounds. Most recently, research by Kantomaa et al (2007) concludes that high

parental education is associated with adolescents being physically active. In boys, father's

high educational level and in girls, both mother's and father's high educational level were

found to be related to the least time spent watching television, and high family income was

associated with being an active sports club member in both boys and girls. However, a 30

year trend analysis by Scheerder et al. (2005) concluded that adolescent participation no

longer correlated with the socio-economic status of the parents.

There also appears to be a paradox between sports involvement and social class with

people from higher social classes more likely to be involved in sport but less likely to be

involved in some sports that are associated with the lower classes (Wilson, 2002).

Similarly, Eitzen and Sage (1991) identified bowling, wrestling and contact sports in

general as more attractive to the working class than to the upper class.

The national Active Sports target for people from socio-economically deprived areas was

set at 40% (120,000) for participants and 30% (6000) for coaches based upon the number

of people and the current number of coaches living in these areas (Sport England, 2000);

however, in view of the particular high incidence of these populations in the Durham Sport

region, these figures were amended by Sport England to 56% for both groups (Table 1).

The literature surrounding the reasons children do or do not participate in sport, the

influence of the family on participation patterns and the sporting preferences of young

people will now be considered.

Reasons Children Do or Do not Participate in Sport

Why do children choose to participate in organised sports? Studies in the area of

participation motivation have increased in recent years. The research centers on the reasons

individuals adopt for initiating, continuing, and sustaining involvement in physical activity,

as well as the reasons for discontinuing involvement (Weiss, 1993). Not surprisingly, many

studies have concluded that 'having fun' is the primary reason children choose sports

participation (Stern, 1990). Skill development, making friends through team involvement,

the challenge of sports, and improving physical fitness have also been commonly identified

factors influencing participation (Chambers, 1991).

Research has demonstrated that perceived confidence and perceived ability also play major roles in participation motivation (Weiss, 1993; Klint, 1987). Weiss (1993) termed this competence 'motivation theory' and concluded that individuals are motivated to demonstrate competence in an achievement area and do so by engaging in mastery attempts. According to Gould (1987), up to 50% of young people discontinue participation in sport. The reasons for this high drop out rate are varied but include interest in other sports, outside interests other than sports, lack of playing time, overemphasis on competition, and dislike of the coach. DuRant et. al (1991) found injury to be the most common factor in the discontinuation of school sport involvement among adolescents and attrition among younger participants as a result of lack of success, a lack of playing time, and absence of fun (Chambers, 1991).

More recent research conducted by Sports Coach UK (2006) has identified the most powerful factors influencing children's participation in sport (Table 3).

Table 3: Children's Motivation to Engage in Sport

Motivation	Age 5-11 years	Age 12-15 years
Enjoyment – Fun	34 %	38%
Physical Competence	20%	22%
Competition	19%	17%
Health	14%	10%
Social – Friends	10%	10%
Social – Influence	3%	3%

Sports Coach UK (2006)

Table 3 illustrates the most salient reasons for participating in sport as having fun, learning and improving their skills, competition, health and social interaction, findings which are supported by previous research by Weiss (2004). The research by Sports Coach UK further recommends that in view of the reasons given for participation by children, coaches should strive to create sessions which enhance physical self-perception, facilitate social interaction and are above all fun and enjoyable. Research by Siraud et al (2005) offers further reasons for children's participation in sport by concluding that boys are generally more competitively orientated and girls are generally more interested in the social opportunities that sport affords.

The reasons that children do not participate in sport have been investigated by Sport England (2002a). The findings of this research highlight the main reason for non participation as not liking being hit, kicked or falling over during sport. Other reasons given were bad weather, getting dirty and getting hot and sweaty. Girls expressed less tolerance to adverse environmental conditions with twice as many girls than boys disliking getting hot, sweaty and dirty and half of the girls compared to a third of boys disliking bad weather.

The literature addressing the influence of the family on children's participation in sport will now be reviewed as the methodology of this study involves assessing the impact of the family on the participants in Active Sports.

Family Influence

An important part of this study is the examination of the influence of the family and in particular parents on the participation of the children involved. Linked to this is the family as a possible source of differentiation in sport in terms of gender, class and ethnic minority attitudes.

There is a significant body of research indicating that family influences contribute positively to children's participation in sport and indeed that the family is the main agent of sports socialisation in children's early years (Trost, 2003; Kohl, 2000; Kote, 1999; Yang, 1996; Weiss, 1995; Colley, 1992). Many (Jambor, 1999; Yang, 1996; Wold, 1992) but not all (DiLorenzo 1998; McMurray, 1993) studies have concluded that children who actively participate in sport are more likely to have active family members and that the participation pattern of the same sex parent is a strong influence (Cote, 1999; Kay, 2000). Recent research by Cleland et al (2005) suggests three possible mechanisms through which parental exercise may influence children's sports participation. Firstly, as role models parents through their own physical activity may instill a value for sport and exercise that positively influences the behaviour of their children. Secondly, physically active parents provide more support and encouragement than sedentary parents for their children to participate in sport and physical activity. However, researchers have reported that over involved parents who exert undue pressure on their children to achieve can have a less than positive influence (Barber, 1998; Brown, 1988). Finally, a genetic predisposition to physical activity may exist, a concept supported by Beunen and Thonis (1999) who reported that children who had physically active parents were 1.2 – 5.8 times more likely to

participate in sport than children with inactive parents. An additional process of parental influence has recently been proposed by Ornelas et al. (2007) who conclude that a supportive parenting style involving good communication develops strong family bonds that are likely to promote self-esteem and ultimately a greater likelihood of physically active children.

Conversely however, family influence can have a negative effect on children's sports participation depending on how highly sport is regarded within the unit. A 'non sporting' family may well reduce the tendency for young members to participate in sport (Harrington, 2003). In addition, the significance of the role of the family has been questioned with some authors suggesting that peer influence is at least as important (Wold, 1992; Carr, 1999).

Nevertheless, regardless of the socialising influence of the family in encouraging children's sports participation, the ability and willingness, or lack of one or both, to provide practical support is another important factor. In some cases, the resources required in terms of money and time to adequately support a child in competitive sport can become a major commitment and one which may be beyond the scope of the family unit (Kay & Lowrey, 2003; Puranaho, 2000; Hepworth, 1999; Kirk, 1997).

In concluding this section, the literature regarding the family as a contributor to gender, class and ethnicity differentiation in sport will now be considered.

In most families, gender stereotyping is part of everyday life. Gender socialisation begins at a very young age with different sports related experiences and attitudes instilled into girls and boys. The result is a qualitative difference in the psychological experience of being male or female (Hargreaves, 1994; Greendorfer, 1977, 1983). Consequently, the child makes a positive association between sport and masculinity and a negative link between sport and 'feminine' behaviour (Kay, 2003). These gendered practices that parents adopt towards children contribute to deep rooted gender expectations that negatively impact on girl's sport involvement (Kay, 2004).

Family factors can contribute to social class differentiation in a number of ways and these can be broadly divided into practical factors and attitudinal factors. Kay (2004) reports low income, lack of private transport and fewer local facilities as practical factors that impact on this differentiation. Studies by Hoefer (2001) and Sallis (1999) describe the availability of parental transport to activities as a major contributor to adolescent participation in sport and physical activity. In addition, as the level of required practical support increases with the level of performance, children from lower socio-economic groups and deprived areas become increasingly under-represented (English Sports Council, 1997; Collins, 2003).

An Australian study by Harrington (2003) reports that family attitudes and values also contribute to class differentiation. The study suggests that middle class families are more likely to access organised after-school sport for their children through a sense of parental responsibility to expose them to the benefits of sport. In contrast, the lower income families are more concerned with family unity through shared leisure activity and in some cases, low income parents held strong negative views on the impact of sport on families.

Although an under researched area, there is some evidence that the family can contribute to ethnic differentiation. Research by Kay and Lowrey (2002) identified some ethnic parental resistance to child participation in sport. This is reported as being mainly due to young people caring for siblings and grandparents, working in family businesses and parents regarding sport as a low priority activity. Also, the majority of UK black children are being raised in one parent families headed by a woman (Kay 2004). This limits the value attached to sport and the practical resources available to engage in it (Kay, 2004). This is supported by previous American research by Lindquist et al. (1999) who reported less physical activity among both Caucasian and African American children from single parent homes, suggesting that the problem is more one of family unit stability than of ethnicity.

In order to compare the sporting preferences of the participants with the sports offered by Active Sports, the children were asked about the additional sports in which they would like to participate. Accordingly, the research literature pertaining to the sporting preferences of young people will now be examined.

Sporting Preferences

In view of the Active Sport equity targets and particularly those surrounding gender and area of residence and considering the previously mentioned paradox of sport involvement and social class, it is necessary to examine the choice of sports included in the initiative and the appropriateness of these sports in relation to the sporting preferences of children. According to research commissioned by Sport England, the relative popularity of sport as a leisure pursuit increased between 1994 and 2002 with 52% of young people disagreeing

with the statement 'I prefer to do things other than sport and exercise' indicating their

preference for sport and exercise over other activities (Mori, 2003). The most popular

sports that young people took part in frequently (at least 10 times) out of lessons in 2002

are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Sports in which children participated at least 10 times out of lessons in 2002

Sport	%
Swimming	51
Cycling	49
Football	37
Roller skating/skateboarding	23
Tennis	22
Snooker, Billiards, Pool	21
Gymnastics	16
Cricket	13
Athletics	13
Dance	12
Basketball	12
Rounders	11
Jogging/Running	11

Adapted from MORI (2003)

The table shows that 6 of the sports included in the Active Sport initiative (swimming,

football, tennis, cricket, athletics and basketball) feature among the most popular sports but

the remaining 4 sports (rugby union, rugby league, netball and hockey) do not. In addition,

of the 5 sports (tennis, cricket, rugby union, netball and hockey) selected by Durham Sport

for inclusion in the first year of the initiative, only cricket and tennis are among the most

popular sports reported by children in England.

More recently, an ongoing survey commissioned by the DCMS entitled 'Taking Part: The national survey of culture leisure and sport' (2007) has assessed the participation of children in sport activities out of school. This survey defined participation as taking part in the last four weeks and the results show some differences in preferences (Table 5) from the MORI (2003) survey (Table 4).

The DCMS survey (2007) reveals that although the three most popular sports are reported as being the same as the MORI poll (2003), the order of preference has changed. The later survey shows football as the most popular activity, with swimming moving down to second place. Cycling also moves down one place to third. In terms of the activities included in the Active Sports initiative, athletics is not now included in the list of most popular sports.

Table 5: Percentage of children participating in sport activities, out of school lessons

Sport	%
Football	46
Swimming	33
Cycling	19
Walking or hiking	19
Snooker, pool, billiards	19
Basketball	14
Cricket	14
Tenpin bowling	13
BMX or mountain biking	12
Jogging, cross country or road running	12
Tennis	12

DCMS (2007)

Sporting Preferences and Gender

The following table categorises the sporting preference of children out of school lessons by gender.

Table 6: Percentages who did each sport at least 10 times out of lessons in 2002 by gender

Sport	Male %	Female %
Swimming	48	55
Cycling	53	45
Football	57	18
Roller skating/Skateboarding	25	22
Tennis	25	20
Snooker, Billiards, Pool	31	11
Gymnastics	11	22
Cricket	22	5
Athletics	13	13
Dance	2	21
Basketball	16	8
Rounders	8	14
Jogging/Running	12	10

Adapted from Mori (2003)

Table 6 shows the percentages of males and females who participated frequently in the most popular sports outside of school lessons. As the table only includes sports with an overall participation of 22% or above, it does not tell the full story. This is because small numbers of male participants in some sports that females participate in frequently do not appear in the list. These sports include badminton (10%), horse riding (11%) and aerobics (19%). Similarly, some sports popular with males are not included due to a lack of female participation. These include darts (14%), weight training (13%), judo/martial arts (12%) and rugby (10%) (Mori, 2003). Nevertheless, the results of this survey show that among

boys, football ranks in first place followed by cycling and swimming. For girls, swimming and cycling are the top two sports followed by roller skating/skateboarding and dance. The survey also identifies changes in participation trends of girls and boys between 1994 and 2002 concluding that fewer boys are cycling frequently out of school lessons and boys are less likely to play cricket and rounders frequently than in 1994. The survey also found that as with boys, cycling as a frequent activity for girls had declined since 1994. In contrast however girls were significantly more likely to play football, do gymnastics, swim and take part in dance in 2002 than in 1994.

Unfortunately the DCMS (2007) survey does not investigate participation by gender as this would have enabled any significant changes in participation from 2002 to 2007 to be highlighted. It should be noted here that the timing of these surveys may have an effect on the results obtained depending on recent successes in particular international sporting events.

When young people take part in sport, the choice of sports in which they participate can be influenced by their recent exposure to sport through major sporting events (Gratton, 2000). The impact of such events can result in an increase in awareness and participation in particular sports. Research carried out by Brown and Massey (2001) into the potential impact of the Commonwealth Games in Manchester concludes that major sporting events and crucially success in these events can impact positively on the participation of young people in sport. Consideration of recent success in major events should be given when examining the sporting choices of young people at any particular time. However, the views

of young people regarding their sporting preferences should always be part of the decision making process when designing interventionist sporting initiatives.

Although, the importance of listening to young people's views on sport has been recognised by policy makers for some time, as the following statement from the then Sports Council indicates the implementation of this concept does not appear to have materialized (Mason, 1995; Macphail et al., 2003).

> *Those of us in the adult world of sport administration and development*
> *must listen carefully to what these children have to say. In particular, we*
> *must listen to those children who tell us that they don't enjoy sport and to*
> *the reasons why this is the case*
> (Mason 1995, foreword).

More recent research by MacPhail et al (2003) involving responses by 600 14-18 year olds to the question 'What can be done to help young people participate in sport?' restates the position by concluding that:

> *.....it is vital that young people's views towards facilitating participation*
> *in sport are taken into account by politicians and policy makers in order*
> *to provide a climate and conditions that meet young peoples' needs*
> (p. 58).

The choice of sports that are offered in the Active Sports initiative do not consider

children's preferences but rather reflect the traditional activities that are taught in schools

and the preferred areas in which the United Kingdom public would like to see success on

the international scene. Research by North (2001) into the public's preferences about the

success and funding of sport in the UK revealed that in terms of international success,

football (17%), athletics (16%), swimming (7%), cricket (7%) and tennis (6%) were the

preferred areas of achievement (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Sports in which the public would most like to see the UK be successful during international competition
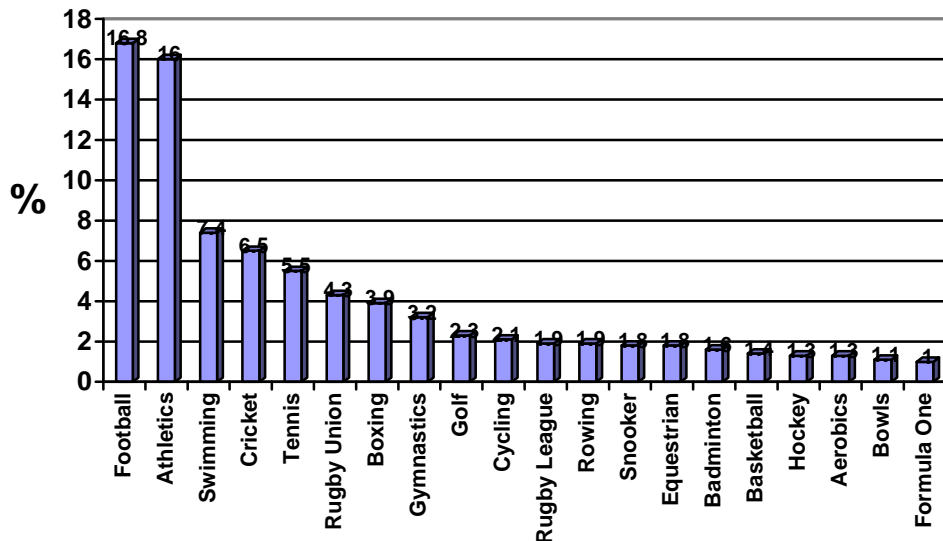
(North, 2007)

Research by MacPhail et al (2003) contend that young people want more time for PE and

sport in schools, have a need for a wider choice of activities and do not support

programmes dominated by traditional sports. The findings of MacPhail et al. (2003)

supports the Prime Minister Gordon Brown's announcement of plans to give every child the opportunity of 5 hours physical activity a week (Webster, 2007) but also that too often the PE curriculum fails to offer activities beyond the 'major' team games (Penney, 2000).

Having examined the motivators for children's participation in sport, it is necessary to consider the same subject with regard to coaches.

Research by Lyle et al. (1997) for Sport Scotland examined the factors that influenced the motivation of 80 sports coaches in 7 sports. The findings of this report indicated that the major motivators for participation in coaching initially were helping young people (96%), a general interest in sport (95%), putting something back into sport (89%) and the enjoyment gained from coaching (88%). The availability of educational courses emerged as the most dominant factor in maintaining their interest in coaching, although career progression was only important to 41%. Interestingly, financial reward was only regarded important by 13% of the coaches when they began coaching but rose to 22% as a factor in them continuing coaching. The financial factor, however, seems to have grown in importance with more recent research by Sports Scotland (2006) indicating that the majority of coaches would like to receive payment for their services.

In view of the requirement of Active Sports to establish development squads in stage 4 of the initiative, it is necessary to review the literature relating to talent identification in sport.

Talent Identification

Regnier et al (1993) define talent identification as:

> *Recognising current participants with the potential to become elite*
>
> *performers. Predicting performance over various periods of time by*
>
> *measuring physical, physiological, psychological and sociological*
>
> *attributes*
>
> (p. 190).

There are conflicting opinions on whether talent is attributable to nature and performance is controlled by genetic factors (Howe, 1999; Sioboda, 1991) or the nativist view that talent is developed through interaction with elements of the surrounding environment such as family, friends and school (Simonton, 1999; Williams, 2000).

It is the case that some young people in all walks of life display skills that are disproportionate to the level of experience they have gained but this does not mean they will necessarily achieve world class status. Similarly, it does not follow that those individuals who do not display such talents at a young age will never excel. Rather, the talent of a young person may not develop further, never be identified or change over time into another talent (Simonton, 1999).There is growing research evidence that genetic make up, although a consideration, is less important than the role played by the environment in the development and stability of sporting talent (Howe, 1999; Williams, 2000).

Successive government initiative in the UK (e.g. Sport Raising the Game, 1996; Young and Active, 1997; Game Plan, 2002) have emphasised physical activity development through the childhood years. The consequence of this is early specialisation in sport and a subsequent acquisition of sports specific skills rather than more generic motor ability skills. This could lead to individuals giving up sport altogether if they do not succeed in their initial sport and they perceive that they do not possess the necessary skills to change sports (Moore, 1998).

If, as Reigner et al (1993) maintain, the purpose of talent identification is to provide an accurate prediction of those individuals who have the potential to compete successfully at world-class level then carrying out the process on young children may not correctly identify future elite athletes. Even though it may be necessary to identify talent at a young age in order to give time for the development of that talent towards elite competition, the unstable nature of that apparent talent through adolescence and into adulthood makes the outcomes of the process unreliable (Ericsson, 1993). The danger is that the early developer or those children with more experience will be identified as having the most talent whereas the individuals with the most potential to develop their existing talent into world class performance will be overlooked. In order to minimise this problem, the talent identification process should be as scientific as possible (Bompa, 1999) including physiological, psychological and anthropological testing that will help to identify those athletes with the potential for talent development. However, as research by Sport Scotland points out, it is often the case that coaches simply report using their gut feeling and experience rather than scientific methods to identify talent (Sport Scotland, 2002). In addition, this research also

recommends the use of continuous assessment to identify talent and not isolated performances which may give a false impression of the ability of athletes.

In concluding this chapter, Active Sports impact studies that have been published during the life of the initiative will be introduced into this review.

The two Active Sports impact studies are the Active Sports Mid Term Report (2002) and the Active Sports/CSP Impact Study Year 3 Final Report (2005). The first of these reports carried out by Sport England sets out the achievements of Active Sports up to 2002 and identifies issues that have emerged and intended actions for dealing with those issues. The report was prepared for consideration by Active Sports Managers and National Governing Bodies with the intention of informing the process by which Active Sports could be improved (Sport England, 2002b). Concerns were expressed about difficulties in convincing stakeholders to become part of the initiative although the report acknowledges that partnership working was a new way of working that challenged existing practice particularly for local authorities and national governing bodies. The initial selection of sports for inclusion in the initiative was questioned by the report however it concludes that this issue had been largely addressed through the introduction of additional sports. Significantly in terms of talent development, Active Sports Development Camps were introduced in 2002 and the first impact study identified this change in structure as a positive step towards bridging the gap between Active Sports and the World Class programmes. With reference to equity targets, this document expressed concern that varying levels of provision below the first stage of Active Sports in relation to the priority groups had meant that the equity targets had proved difficult to achieve. This difficulty was

highlighted as particularly the case in meeting ethnicity and area of deprivation targets. In this regard, the report concludes that a greater awareness of the need to meet these targets must be fostered within Active Sports partnerships and staff should be trained in the processes necessary to deliver them (Sport England, 2002b).

Early indications regarding the positive nature of the experience of participants in the initiative are identified in the mid term report (Sport England, 2002b). However, further concerns are expressed about the effectiveness of the monitoring process, the accuracy of participant profiling and the lack of qualitative evidence of the success of the initiative. The report concludes by stating that the profile, image and credibility of Active Sports was low and that this problem should be addressed by improving understanding of the scheme in schools, clubs and the media (Sport England, 2002b).

The second of these reports commissioned by Sport England and compiled by Knight, Kavanagh and Page (2005) does not fully consider the impact of Active Sports. The title of the document is Active Sports/CSP Impact Study Year 3 Final Report however, on closer inspection and, as the report intimates, the focus of attention had shifted to examining partnership issues and in particular the transition to broader County Sports Partnerships. Although Active Sports is briefly considered in the report, the change of emphasis to the delivery of sports development initiatives at a regional level indicates that Sport England were prepared to conclude Active Sports without a systematic review of the initiative. Improvements in club and coach development are attributed to the Active Sports initiative but the report gives no consideration to equity target, numbers of participants and coaches or their views on the initiative.

This concludes the review of the literature consulted in order to establish the existing body of knowledge that relates to the areas of investigation within this study. The next chapter will examine and justify the methodology chosen to explore those areas of investigation.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Methodology

Opening with a review of the challenges facing the researcher, the chapter continues with

an explanation of why and how the study developed, followed by an identification of the

selected methodology required in the collection of data relevant to answer the research

questions. Having identified the questions to be answered and highlighted what data needed

to be collected, consideration is given to reliability and validity in relation to the

requirements of the research. The chosen research design is then presented and the

strengths and weaknesses of this design are analysed. Specific ethical considerations are

examined before an overview and justification of the selected measurement tools. The

design of each of these tools is then explained in relation to the specific needs of the

research and detailed delivery protocols are presented.

The Research Question

The aim of the research was to establish if the Active Sports initiative was an effective

vehicle to facilitate the progression of young children through a series of pre-determined

stages towards elite performance and therefore determine if it constituted the first step to

sporting excellence.

The objectives of the project were:

1.   To identify the numbers and profiles of participants and coaches engaged in the

       Active Sports initiative.

2. To identify and compare the participants and coaches interpretation of the nature of their experience during the Active Sports initiative.

3. To assess the extent to which the initiative achieved the set equity targets.

4. To assess the current sporting involvement of the children and the influence of the initiative on that involvement.

5. To assess the impact of the scheme through the views of the coaches.

The study evolved from the monitoring and evaluation of the Active Sports initiative in the Durham Sport region. This process began in March 2001 and continued over a 42 month period, concluding in September 2004. The Durham Sport Partnership commissioned Durham University to carry out this project which involved the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. In order to monitor the progress of the initiative this data was assimilated on a monthly basis and was collected to form annual reports which were presented to the Durham Sport Steering Group (see Figure 6). The steering group contained representatives from all of the partners involved in the project and was responsible for the overall strategic planning of the Durham Sport Partnership. The data was also disseminated to Sport England who were the funding body for the initiative so that they were continually aware of the progress being made towards the achievement of the pre-set targets and goals.

Figure 6: The Durham Sport Partnership Management Structure

```
                        ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                        │  DURHAM SPORT STEERING      │
                        │         GROUP               │
                        └─────────────────────────────┘
      ┌──────────────────────┐         │
      │  CHIEF LEISURE       │─────────┤
      │  OFFICERS GROUP      │         │
      └──────────────────────┘         │
              ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
              │  DURHAM SPORT MANAGEMENT GROUP      │
              │  (CHIEF OFFICERS SUB GROUP)         │
              └─────────────────────────────────────┘
                        │
              ┌─────────────────────────────┐
              │  PARTNERSHIP MANAGER        │
              └─────────────────────────────┘
                        │
              ┌─────────────────────────────┐
              │  DURHAM SPORT DEVELOPMENT TEAM │
              └─────────────────────────────┘
      ┌──────────────────┐     │     ┌──────────────────┐
      │  COACHING FORUM  │─────┼─────│   PARTNERSHIP    │
      └──────────────────┘     │     └──────────────────┘
          ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │  THE GOVERNING BODIES OF THE 11 FOCUS SPORTS │
          └─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
  ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐
  │ THE 8 DISTRICT AND│   │  DURHAM COUNTY   │   │   DURHAM     │
  │ BOROUGH COUNCILS  │   │    COUNCIL       │   │  UNIVERSITY  │
  └──────────────────┘   └──────────────────┘   └──────────────┘
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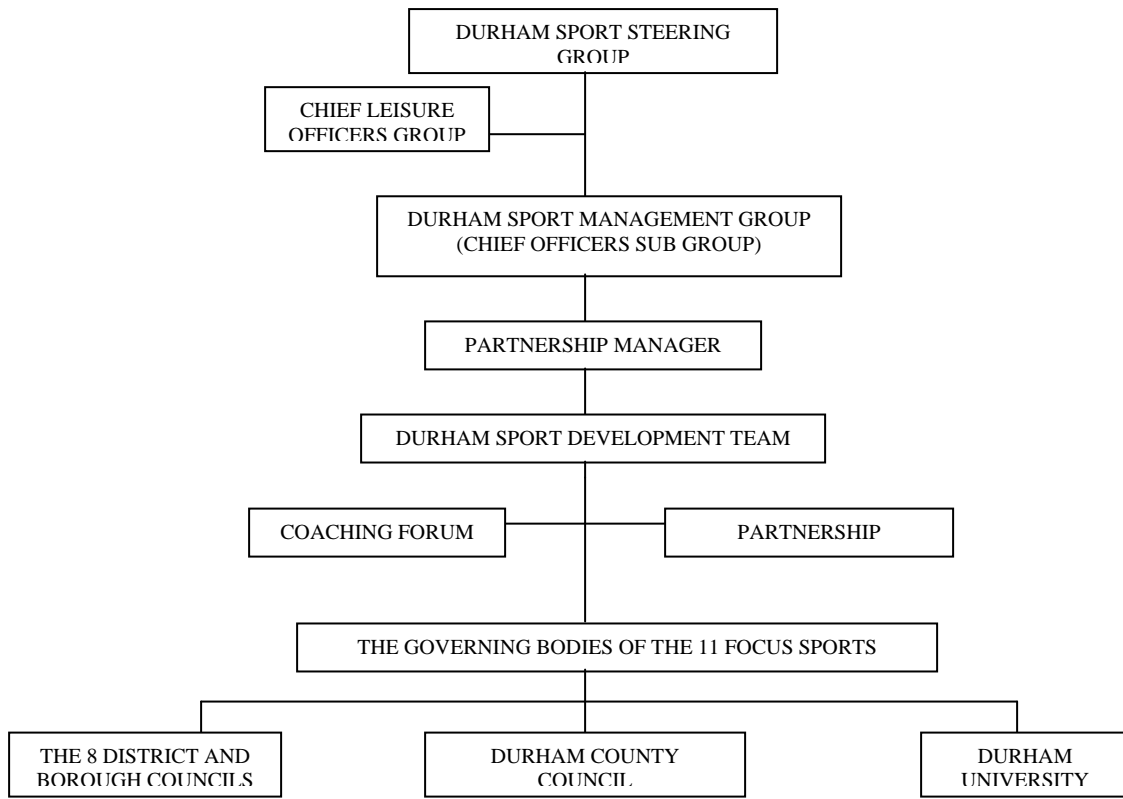
(Durham Sport, 1999)

Whenever a research project is commissioned it is important throughout the research to anticipate any potential problems that may arise (Grinyer, 1999). Furthermore, issues of accountability need to be addressed to ensure that all parties are aware of the management structure responsible for the successful delivery of the project. In this case, the researcher was accountable to the Durham Sport Partnership Manager and in turn to the Durham Sport Steering Group for carrying out the monitoring and evaluation process required by Sport England. Through this process, data was collected and used as the basis for this thesis, which was prepared independently from \Durham Sport. Because of the fluid and progressive nature of the Active Sports initiative, it was necessary to hold regular meetings

to ensure that all parties were continually informed of the progress of the monitoring and evaluation process. This fluidity, (e.g. the introduction of new sports throughout the initiative) was a potential problem in that the exact scale of the project could not be accurately estimated at the outset. The progression through the four stages of Active Sports also presented a challenge as it was important to put systems in place to effectively track participants throughout the course of the scheme. For these reasons, an interactive approach to the evaluation process was decided upon. Scott et al. (1999) emphasise the need for continuous interaction throughout the research process between researchers, funding bodies and user groups in order that all stakeholders are fully informed and that any problems that arise are promptly addressed. Furthermore, Grinyer (1999) supports the model used by Durham Sport by concluding that *'it is often helpful to establish a steering group, including external mediators, that meet regularly to address issues arising from the research'* (p 5).

The evaluation process aimed to assess the impact of the Active Sports initiative on the participation of children in sport in the Durham Sport region and ultimately the data collected formed the basis from which this research developed. In addition the results of this research were used to inform Durham Sport and ultimately Sport England of limitations in the process of delivering Active Sports. This acknowledges the views of Coalter (2006) that measuring outcomes without considering the process involved in producing those outcomes is limiting in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

In order to answer the research question, the first line of investigation involved the collection of data regarding the numbers and personal profiles of both participants and coaches. This data was then used to examine the question 'to what extent did Active Sports

achieve its equity targets in the Durham Sport region?' Answering this question was important as it would indicate if the initiative had served to provide a socially inclusive intervention with equality of participation opportunities for all children in the local community, allowing those who took advantage of the opportunities to progress in sport. In order for this part of the research to be answered, data was collected in respect of the numbers of participants and coaches from ethnic minorities, with disabilities, from areas of deprivation and from each gender.

Having established whether Active Sports had or had not provided equality of opportunity, the next step was to ascertain the views of the participants regarding their experience of this opportunity. The significance of this section of the research was that if Active Sports was to be successful in providing pathways for children to progress to excellence then the product that it delivered should ensure an enjoyable and fulfilling experience for the participants. Similarly, the views of the coaches regarding their own and the children's experience of the sessions was important information in evaluating the extent to which the initiative was suitable for its purpose.

Once the participants' and coaches' views regarding the quality of provision were known then more detailed background information regarding the potential influences on participation of the children was required. This part of the research was necessary in order to gather data about potential barriers and facilitators that could impact on the initiative's ability to provide effective pathways to success for children with differing external influences impacting on their opportunities to participate in sport.

The final part of the research question required the collection of information on the coaches' understanding of the purposes of the initiative and their opinions as to whether Active Sports was successful in achieving its aims. This information was seen as crucial in assessing the effectiveness of the scheme through the eyes of the people responsible for its delivery and gave the opportunity to obtain suggestions for possible improvements.

Now that the research question and the areas of investigation necessary to answer that question have been established, the research design and the data collection methods will be considered. However, as good reliability and validity are seen as essential pre-requisites to effective research design (Marczyk, 2005), these two issues will first be examined in relation to this research project.

Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which any measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials and is concerned with the accuracy of the measuring instrument or procedure. Golofshani (2003) offers a more comprehensive definition:

> *The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research implement is considered to be reliable* (p.597).

In order for reliability to be maximised in survey research several potential undermining influences to that reliability need to be addressed. The first such influence is subject error (Gratton, 2004). This is a situation in which a subject may respond in a different way depending on when they are questioned. For example, in this study, responses from participants could be influenced by their performance in the Active Sports sessions. If this performance was perceived by the participant as particularly positive or negative, then this could be reflected in responses to questions. The process of data collection could have been carried out away from Active Sports activities, however, it was considered necessary to maximise the participant's ability to differentiate between Active Sports sessions and other activities. Consequently, questionnaire and interviews were administered before the commencement of the Active Sports sessions.

Researcher error can also pose a threat to reliability (Gratton, 2004). When more than one researcher is involved in the collection of the same data in a project, there is potential for each of them to interpret the techniques and protocols in a different fashion. These variations may include differences in verbal instructions regarding the completion of questionnaires and anomalies in the level of conference allowed between respondents. In this study, the problem of researcher error was eliminated, as all the questionnaires and interviews were administered by the same researcher. Finally, subject bias can impact on reliability (Gratton, 2004). Respondents may attempt to answer questions in such a way that they provide the researcher with 'correct' responses. This situation can apply when subjects are concerned about who will see their answers. For example, a participant asked to give views on the standard of coaching received during Active Sports sessions may give artificially positive responses if they think that the coaches will have access to the

information. This problem was minimised by the researcher providing assurances regarding the anonymity of the study and instructions that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions. The second important research issue to be considered is validity.

Validity

Validity is concerned with the degree to which the methods used in a study succeed in measuring what the researcher set out to measure (Last, 2001). There are different dimensions to validity, the first of which is face validity. This component is concerned with whether the methods chosen appear appropriate for gathering the required information. In this case, the use of survey research through registration forms, questionnaires and interviews to collect both quantitative and qualitative data has face validity. Content validity is *based on the extent to which a measurement reflects the specific intended domain of content* (Carmines, 1991, p.20) and construct validity is *the degree to which a test measures a hypothetical construct and is usually established by relating test results to some behaviour* (Thomas, 2001, p.184). In order to explain the context in which content and construct validity were ensured, these forms of validity will be considered when describing the selected measurement tools.

Reliability and validity are important issues when selecting and designing measurement tools within an overall research design that is suitable to answer the research question. The research design used in this study will now be presented and justified.

Research Design

The following table (Table 7) outlines the research design of the study, detailing the areas

of investigation, the data collection methods chosen and the advantages and disadvantages

of each of the chosen methods.

Table 7: Research Design

Part of Research Question	Information to be Collected	Collection Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Equity targets	Number of participants and coaches, their gender, area of residence, disability and ethnicity	Written individual registration form	Obtains information from all coaches and participants as completion of form is mandatory	Possibility of duplication of data
Quality of participant experience	Participants' experience of the initiative	Group administered questionnaire	- Sample control (Babbie, 2003) - Response control (Babbie, 2003) - Ease of analysis (Oppenheim, 2000) - Cross referencing with coach responses	- Subject error (Gratton, 2004) - Subject bias (Gratton , 2004) - Lack of knowledge of the initiative - Age difference of participants
Quality of coach experience	Coaches' experiences of the initiative	Individually administered questionnaire	- Sample control (Long, 2007) - Response control - Ease of analysis - Cross referencing with participant responses	- Subject error - Subject bias - Lack of knowledge of the initiative
Sporting involvement of participants and influences on that involvement	Details of participants' sports involvement, family influence, sporting preference self efficacy, method of travel views on sport and suggestions for improvement	Face- to- face interview	- Sample control - Control of variables (Bell, 2005)	- Subject error - Subject bias - Researcher error (Gratton, 2004)
Impact and suitability for purpose of the initiative	Details of coaches' knowledge and opinions of the initiative	Face- to- face interview	- Sample control - Control of variables	- Lack of knowledge of the initiative - Availability of coaches - Subject error - Subject bias

As the table shows, the methods adopted are registration form, questionnaire and interview.

This constitutes a Survey Research Design, which is essentially a research technique used

to determine present practices and/or opinions of a specified population (Thomas, 2001).

Surveys may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes and are mainly

used in studies that have individuals as the focus of analysis (Babbie, 2003). In such

research, a sample from the population under investigation is selected and typically

standardised questions are asked of them using questionnaires and/or interviews. The

survey may be in a variety of forms, including written, with participants completing written

documents, administered online using email or conducted by telephone. It may also consist

of face to face interviews (Babbie, 1990).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Survey Research

Although survey design is one of the most popular forms of research in the social sciences,

there are several advantages and disadvantages to be considered when choosing this

method. The first advantage of the survey method is that it is relatively inexpensive,

particularly when the administration of questionnaires and interviews are carried out face to

face by a single researcher (Trochim, 2000).

Surveys are also useful in obtaining data from a large sample and the larger this sample, the

more statistically significant the results obtained (Bouma, 2004). In this case, it was

envisaged at the outset that the number of potential subjects could exceed 5,000 and

therefore the survey would be the most appropriate method of gathering information. The

survey presents all respondents with a standardised stimulus, in this case the questions

asked, which increases reliability by eliminating any subjectivity by the researcher and

facilitating reproduction of the methodology. The standardisation of questions also allows

the collection of similar data from different groups which can then be analysed comparatively. However, this standardisation can also be a weakness of the survey method as it may force the researcher to compromise in the development of the questions in order for them to be appropriate to all respondents (Groves, 2004).

Another potential weakness of the questionnaire and interview in comparison with, for example, direct observation is that they only measure what the respondents say they do or prefer or believe and this may be quite different to what is actually the case. Thus, although the survey method may be strong on reliability, it may also be weak on validity. That is to say, that although an individual may consistently give the same responses to questions, making the study reliable, their interpretation of the questions may be completely different from another respondent, hence decreasing validity (Marshall, 1999).

Finally, the survey may prove to be inflexible in comparison with direct observation as the initial study design needs to remain unchanged throughout the process of data collection. For example, a field researcher may become aware of an unforeseen variable influencing the behaviour of subjects and decide to include observations of this new factor. A survey researcher on the other hand does not have the luxury of modification of the initial survey design (Silverman, 1997). However, this inflexibility can to some extent be eliminated by effective piloting of the survey to establish and eliminate any omissions in the questionnaire and interview design. The piloting procedure will be discussed in detail when describing this design process. On reflection, the survey design employed served to generate data regarding the opinions of the participants and coaches as to the effectiveness of the initiative, but did not produce hard evidence regarding this effectiveness. If the

approach used had been designed to examine the actual achievements of the initiative in terms of the progression of the participants and coaches towards excellence, then this would have facilitated more robust analysis of the scheme.

Ethical Considerations in Survey Research

Whatever design is chosen, and survey research is no exception, ethical issues need to be considered. As Price (1996) argues, *'it is better to compromise the research rather than compromise the participants'* (p.207).

According to Blaxter (1999), the ideal way to overcome ethical issues in terms of who takes part in the survey is to use volunteer subjects. This, however, poses problems for several reasons. Because of the lack of researcher control over the profile of the subsequent participants, the representative nature of the sample is likely to be compromised. Furthermore, the motives of the volunteers are open to question as for example they may have unusually positive or negative views of the initiative which they wish to express. An involuntary sample may sometimes be used, for instance when simply counting the number of participants attending a coaching session, however, when using questionnaires and interviews this is inappropriate, as the consent of the individual to take part in the survey is required.

In survey research, the best method of ensuring an ethical approach to data collection is that of informed consent (Groves, 2004). The selected sample should be informed of the nature of the study and how the data will be used. Confidentiality of the information and

anonymity of the subjects should be assured along with the right of the individual to

withdraw from the study (McFee, 2006). In addition, ethical approval for the methods and

processes used in this study was requested and obtained from the University of Durham

Ethics Committee. The exact process of obtaining informed consent in this study will be

discussed in the next section when describing the selected measurement tools.

The Selected Measurement Tools

Table 8: The Considered Measurement Tools

Measurement Tool	Advantages	Disadvantages	Relationship with the Study
Direct Observation	- Allows quantitative data collection - Allows qualitative data collection re: reactions of subjects	- Does not allow collection of qualitative data re: opinions	Rejected
Mail Survey	- Allows contact with all Subjects	- Low response rates - Self exclusion - Subject bias	Rejected
Electronic Survey	- Less cost than telephone or mail survey	- Sampling problems	Rejected
Individual Registration Forms	- Pre-requisite to participation - Minimal cost - High response rate	- Possible duplication of data	Selected for use with participants and coaches
Individual Administered Questionnaires	- Face to face - Sample control - Standardisation of Instructions	- Subject error - Subject bias	Selected for use with Coaches
Group Administered Questionnaires	- Face to face - Sample control - Standardisation of instructions - Large numbers at one time	- Subject error - Subject bias	Selected for use with participants
Telephone Interviews	- Collection of qualitative data re: opinions	- Cost	Rejected
Face to Face Interviews	- Collection of qualitative data re: opinions - Face to face - In depth responses	- Subject error - Subject bias	Selected for use with participants and coaches

Table 8 provides an overview of the measurement tools considered for use in this project. It contains details of the specific advantages and disadvantages of their use in relation to this project and the decision taken regarding their utilisation within the study. As the table shows, the types of measurement tools that were considered for use in this study were direct observation, mail surveys, electronic surveys, individual registration forms, individual administered questionnaires, group administered questionnaires, telephone interviews and face to face interviews (Babbie, 1990).

Direct observation was the first measurement tool to be considered when designing the methodology for this research. This method can be used to collect quantitative data (e.g. the number of times a participant receives praise from a coach) but is more usually associated with qualitative data (e.g. about how participants react to that praise) (Long, 2008). However, in this case as the qualitative data was to be derived from opinions of the participants and coaches, it was not appropriate for this research.

A mail survey would have enabled the researcher to contact all of the participants involved in the Active Sports initiative. However, response rates to mail surveys can be low and those who do respond may have a more favourable attitude toward the topic and more positive attitudes about themselves than non-respondents (Green, 1991). This self exclusion by less enthusiastic participants would therefore reduce the validity of the data collected. In addition, the cost implication of mailing over 6000 participants and 200 coaches, providing return envelopes and postage as well as following up non-respondents would have been considerable.

Electronic survey by email reduces research costs when compared to postal or telephone surveys however, limitations regarding credibility of the sample, confidentiality and privacy have been expressed (Shannon et al. 2002). The most important issue when considering the use of electronic surveys in this research was the potential sampling problems. Access to email and technological knowledge of all participants and coaches could not be ensured particularly in the case of those living in an area of deprivation and the younger participants in the initiative.

In light of the above, it was decided to use individual registration forms to collect equity data. The completion of these forms was a pre-requisite to participation in the initiative and these were to be completed in the presence of Active Sports personnel. The cost of the process was therefore minimal and the response rate was guaranteed at 100%.

Similarly, a group administered questionnaire was the chosen method for collecting opinions of participants regarding their experience of the initiative and individually administered questionnaires for the coaches. An advantage of these questionnaires is that they are carried out face to face and therefore, the researcher has a high level of control over the sample and is able to target specific groups in order to ensure the representative nature of the survey. In addition, the group situation allows standardisation of instructions given to the respondents and a large number of completed questionnaires can be obtained at one time (Silverman, 1997).

Telephone interviews were considered but rejected because of the unnecessary expense and the high attendance of the participants and coaches at Active Sport sessions. Given the

good attendance, face to face interviews were chosen as the best method to collect the

necessary qualitative data from participants and coaches to answer the research question. In

the case of the participating children, these interviews would provide information regarding

their sporting background, preferences, attitudes and influences. The coach interviews were

used as a tool to obtain in depth details of their knowledge and opinions regarding the

initiative. The interview has all the benefits of the face to face administration of

questionnaires mentioned above with the added advantage of eliminating unanswered

questions due to a lack of understanding (Babbie, 2003).

Once the pertinent research tools had been selected, how exactly they would be designed

and administered to collect the appropriate data to answer the research question was

considered. The following section shows the results of that consideration.

This section gives details of the chronology of the data collection schedule, descriptions of

each of the chosen measurement tools, and the processes used to administer the survey.

This information is necessary to understand how the administration of each tool informed

the design of the next, what that design was and how the tool was used to collect the

information necessary to address the research question.

Figure 7 shows the chronological sequence of the data collection, the data collected by each

measurement tool and the total number of responses to each tool. This information

indicates the extent of the study and the amount of data generated to answer each research

question during the course of the data collection schedule.

Figure 7: The Chronology and Extent of the Data Collection Schedule

March 01 – Sept 04	→	Registration Forms (Equity Data)	→	Participants n: 6012 Coaches n: 228
March 02 – March 04	→	Group Administered Questionnaires (Participant Experience Data)	→	Participants n: 405
October 02 – March 04	→	Individually Administered Questionnaires (Coach Experience Data)	→	Coaches n: 39
Sept 03 – June 04	→	Face to Face Interviews –Participants (Sporting Involvement Data)	→	Participants n: 83
Sept 03 – June 04	→	Face to Face Interviews – Coaches (Initiative Impact Data)	→	Coaches n: 10

Initially, registration form data was collected and, because of the ongoing recruitment of new participants and coaches, this continued throughout the course of the monitoring and evaluation process. The registration form data informed the sampling process as it provided an emerging picture of the population profile of both the participants and coaches. For this reason and in order to give participants sufficient time to familiarise themselves with the Active Sport experience, the completion of group administered questionnaires began a year

after the start of the research project. This process took 2 years to complete and therefore produced data from participants who had up to 3 years experience of the initiative.

For the same reasons, the collection of data via individually administered coach questionnaires began 19 months after the commencement of monitoring and evaluation. The further seven months delay was used to consider the information collected from the participants in order to use that information to inform the content of the coach questionnaires. This allowed direct comparison between the responses of the coaches and the participants on issues such as perceptions of enjoyment of sessions and impact on skill acquisition.

During the course of gathering data through questionnaires, the information was used to identify areas for further investigation through face to face interview. Consequently, these interviews began 30 months into the project, which ensured that it was possible to select interviewees with sufficient experience to provide informed opinions with respect to the initiative.

Each of the selected measurement tools and the protocols used for their delivery will now be described. The first tool to be considered is the registration form.

Registration Forms

All participants (Appendix D) and coaches (Appendix E) completed registration forms which were effectively questionnaires providing information regarding their age, gender, sport, disability (if any), ethnic background and postcode. This information was used to monitor the performance of the initiative against equity targets.

The registration form began with a brief description of the Active Sports initiative along with reasons why the information was being collected. These reasons were:

- To ensure that all young people in Active Sports were as safe as possible.

- To provide the parents with further information regarding available sporting opportunities.

- To track the children in their chosen sport(s).

- To ensure that Active Sports were open to all communities (equal opportunities).

This information was provided in order to inform the participants and parents of the purpose of Active Sports and to explain the importance of providing the registration information. This in turn increased the motivation of the respondent to complete the form fully and in a diligent manner (De Vaus, 2002).

In order to collect the necessary data to monitor the equity targets of the initiative and address the section of the research question relating to these targets (Table 7), the form required the participant to provide their name, address, post code, age, gender and contact details, together with details of the sport, venue and Active Sports stage of the activity. In

addition, details of ethnic origin and any disability were also required. With the safety of

the participants in mind and in accordance with ethical considerations for research design

(Gratton, 2004), the form requested information regarding details of emergency contacts,

people authorised to collect the children, medical conditions, current medication and

injuries. An informed consent statement was also included in the form which gave

assurances of confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the research project.

Finally, a declaration of compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and NSPCC

guidelines was included in the form along with the consent of the parent/guardian for the

taking of photographs for publicity purposes.

All of the questions included in the registration form, were of a closed nature requiring

either a single specific response or one or more responses from a series of choices. This

method of questionnaire design was used to provide quantitative information in its simplest

format for ease of analysis and to make completion of the form simple and quick for

respondents (Gratton, 2004). The justification for using registration questionnaires was the

need to obtain responses to standard requests for information from a range of people over a

large geographical area (Thomas, 2001). Because the information involved was of a basic

factual nature (e.g. age, gender, post code) and the units of measurement of these

characteristics were standard, then construct validity, which ensures the facility to compare

with other measures of the same criteria, (de Vaus, 2002) was not a design issue.

However, the content validity of the registration form which involved the assessment of the

suitability for purpose of a measurement tool (Long, 2007) was an issue and was

established in consultation with the Durham Sport Partnership Manager. This person was in charge of the delivery of Active Sports and as such had expert knowledge of the requirements of the registration form. Consequently, her approval of the form indicated that it was high in content validity.

The postcode of each person was important data to collect, as this was the means by which the electoral ward of residence was established and consequently the areas of relative deprivation identified. This information was then cross referenced with the 20% most deprived local authority wards identified in the then Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (DTLR) Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2002 for England and Sport England's list of priority areas. Consequently those individuals residing in priority/disadvantaged areas could be identified and the data compared to the equity targets set for the Partnership.

The protocol for registering the participants and coaches will now be explained. Important aspects that could impact on the effectiveness of the registration process and in turn on facilitating the collection of information required to address the research question will also be considered.

Participant Registration Protocol

In this study a total of 6012 children (Table 9) aged 9-16 years completed registration questionnaires. Of these, 2813 were male (47%) and 3199 were female (53%). The volume of registration forms completed by participants and the amount of information they

contained necessitated a co-coordinated approach to collecting and recording the information. The registration forms were completed by participants and collected by coaches when each child attended their first Active Sports session. The forms were then delivered to Durham Sport where the details were entered onto a secure central database by administrative staff. In the case of children participating in more than one sport, they were treated as separate registrations however, children re-registering for the same sport at a different stage or in a subsequent year were not. This ensured that there was no duplication of information and consequent contamination of the overall numbers of participants registered on the initiative. This possible duplication of information and the resultant inconsistency of data (Howe, 2001) had been identified as a potential disadvantage of using registration forms (Table 7) and would have resulted in less than accurate equity statistics.

Coach Registration Protocol

A total of 228 coaches registered on the initiative (Table 12). Of these, 127 (56%) were male and 101 (44%) female. Each coach was required to complete an induction process before delivering activities and was subsequently employed on a casual basis, centrally through the Durham Sport Partnership. The induction process included an induction evening that required the completion of an application form by the coach which provided information regarding area of residence, sport, coaching experience and qualifications, medical information and a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. These details were then recorded on a secure database by Durham Sport staff and regularly updated as changes in circumstances occurred. In some cases, coaches registered to deliver sessions in more than one sport, and as with the participant registration forms, careful consideration was given to

the need to avoid duplication of data. The ongoing collection of information through the

coach registration forms would generate the data required to assess to what extent Active

Sports was meeting the coach equity targets. In addition, coaches received an employment

pack containing equity information and details of their roles and responsibilities. Details of

the suite of coach education courses were provided along with information regarding the

requirements of the initiative for coaches to engage with these courses. Each coach also

received a coach benefits package including a Durham Sport uniform that, for identification

purposes, they were expected to wear when delivering Active Sports sessions.

In addition to quantitative data obtained from the registration forms, questionnaires and

interviews were conducted in order to gather both quantitative and qualitative information

about the participants' and coaches' experience of and opinions regarding the initiative.

The design of these measurement tools and the protocols used for their delivery will now

be explained and reference made to the specific requirements of these tools to fulfil the

needs of the study.

Participant Questionnaire (Appendix B)

The participant questionnaire began with a short introduction which included a polite

request that the individual spend a few minutes answering the questions in order for

information to be collected regarding their experience of the Active Sports initiative. It was

then explained that the survey was important to help improve the scheme for the future and

that the responses would be kept confidential. As the respondents were children aged 10

and over, the term confidential was clarified as 'we will not tell anybody your answers'. Finally, the introduction expressed thanks for their contribution to the study.

The first section of the questionnaire required the respondent to provide generic information regarding their name, address, postcode, age, telephone number, sport and the date they completed the survey. This information was used to monitor the representative nature of the questionnaire respondents in relation to the overall survey population. This monitoring process enabled the researcher to target particular groups within the survey population in order to ensure the sample was representative of each of these groups.

The main body of the questionnaire comprised 18 questions, 16 of which were of a 'tick box' nature and the remaining two required the respondent to write their answer in a box. This question format was chosen both for its simplicity and also because it is regarded as the best method of producing clear and therefore easily analysed responses (Blaxter, 1999). The majority of the questions (16) were of a closed nature, requiring the participant to choose an answer from a number of options provided. Closed questions are defined as a 'category of question found in questionnaires or interviews that requires a specific response and that often takes the form of rankings, scaled items, or categorical responses' (Thomas, 2001 p.263). In this case, these closed questions were of a Likert Scale nature (Bouma, 2004), involving the participant choosing a response to a statement that best described their experience of Active Sports sessions. For example, the first question required a response to the statement '*I have fun at Active Sports activities*' and the five choices ranged from '*all of the time*' through '*most of the time*', '*sometimes*' and '*not very often*' to '*never*'. This form of question has the advantage of providing uniformity of response and facilitating ease of

processing as well as providing construct validity. Although the remaining two questions were open ended, this was of a limited nature as the respondents were simply asked to state the age at which they first participated in Active Sports and to state additional sports in which they would like to take part. Open questions are defined as a 'category of question in questionnaires and interviews that allow the respondent considerable latitude to express feelings and to expand on ideas' (Thomas, 2001, p. 263).

Finally, the questionnaire concluded with thanks for participating in the research and contact details of the researcher for use by the participant or their parents in the event that they had any queries regarding the survey. This was included as a matter of courtesy and also to reassure those involved of the legitimacy of the project (Oppenheim, 2000).

The content of the questionnaire was designed to collect information from three distinct areas of investigation. These areas were the participant's experience of the initiative, their physical activity patterns and their sporting preferences. This design was used in order to generate the necessary information to address the section of the research question which refers to the quality of the participant's Active Sports experience (Table 7).

The content validity of the participant questionnaire was tested by conducting a pilot study. The questionnaire was administered in accordance with the delivery protocol (which is explained in the next section) to four children (two male, two female) aged between 10 and 14 years. These children were selected to match the personal profile of the participants in the main study and also because they had experience of the Active Sports initiative in a different area of the region (Hartlepool).

The term '*pilot study'* has two different meanings in survey research. It can refer to a small scale version of the whole study (Polit, 2001) or the pre-testing of a particular research measurement tool in order to assess and develop its adequacy (Baker, 1994). In this case, it was the latter function of the pilot study that was of interest. The sequence of steps used to carry out the pilot study was as follows:

- The questionnaire was administered to four pilot subjects in exactly the same way as it was to be administered in the main study.
- The participants were asked to give feedback regarding any problems with understanding or answering the questions.
- The time taken to complete the questionnaire was recorded in order to decide whether it was reasonable.
- The completed questionnaires were checked for unanswered questions.
- Problem questions were re-worded and/or re-scaled in accordance with the feedback.

Pilot studies are a crucial element of good study design and although their completion does not guarantee the success of the full-scale survey, it does increase its likelihood (Teijlingen, 2001). In this case, the pilot study served to identify and eliminate any potential questionnaire design problems.

Participant Questionnaire Delivery Protocol

This questionnaire was administered to groups of participants by the same researcher at the site of the Active Sports activity, before the session began. The size of these groups varied

depending on the facilities available and the sample requirements at the time. Initially all of the attending children completed the questionnaire but, as the survey developed, respondents were chosen to ensure the representative nature of the sample. At each venue, participants were shown to a suitable indoor area and given a questionnaire and pen. They were then asked to select an area of the room away from other participants and requested not to confer with each other. The researcher then informed the participants of the purpose of the questionnaire and that they were not obliged to take part. Once the willingness of the subjects was established, instructions were given to read each question carefully and complete all sections of the questionnaire. On each separate occasion, the instructions given to the participants were the same. This standardisation of instruction served to maximise the response control of the questionnaire administration (Babbie, 2003) which had been identified as an advantage of using questionnaires (Table 7). Finally, the subjects were assured of the confidentiality of their responses and that help was available from the researcher if they experienced any difficulty in answering the questions. On completion of the questionnaire, the participants were thanked for their contribution to the research survey and escorted back to the Active Sport session.

The questionnaires were collected by the researcher and the contents entered onto a secure Microsoft Access database. In order to ensure confidentiality (McFee, 2006), the hard copies of the completed questionnaires were stored in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher had access.

Coach Questionnaire (Appendix C)

As with the participant questionnaire, this measurement tool began with an introductory

statement requesting that the coach devoted a few minutes of their time to provide

qualitative data regarding the Active Sports initiative. The statement continued with an

explanation of the value of the information they would be providing to the monitoring and

evaluation process in identifying areas for consideration and improvement throughout the

life of the initiative. This was followed by an assurance of confidentiality and an expression

of thanks for the coaches valued support.

In order to ensure the representative nature of the sample, the respondents were required to

provide their name, contact details, their sport and the date they completed the

questionnaire.

All 17 questions were of a closed nature with 16 of these utilising a five point Likert scale

to ascertain the degree of agreement or disagreement of the coaches with statements

regarding the initiative. These statements explored the coaches' opinions on the

effectiveness of the initiative and also their perceptions of the quality of the participants'

experience and performance during the sessions. This information was required as these

two areas of investigation had been identified as important in addressing the section of the

research question relating to the coaches' experience of the initiative (Table 7).

The five alternative responses to the statements in the questionnaire ranged from '*strongly*

agree' through '*agree',' unsure'* and '*disagree'* to '*strongly disagree'*. The advantage of

this scaling of questions is that it affords the respondent a greater range of expression than

simple 'yes' and 'no' answers (Oppenheim, 2000) and this standard format also provides construct validity. In the interest of conciseness of the questionnaire, the remaining question (Question 9) was designed in tabular form to obtain data about the coaches' opinions of the educational courses they had attended. As it was the intention at this stage of the research to collect qualitative data from the coaches, each of the questions contained a place for additional comments where they could express their opinions in more detail, without the constraints of scaled responses. The open-ended nature of this comments section gave the respondent the freedom to provide information that they perceived as being important (Bouma, 2004).

As with the participant questionnaire, this measurement tool concluded with further thanks for the coaches' participation in the survey and contact details of the researcher.

The content validity of the coach questionnaire was tested by carrying out a small scale pilot study using three members of staff from the Durham Sport Partnership. The participants were all experienced coaches with an in-depth knowledge of the Active Sports initiative, making them ideally suited to provide feedback regarding the suitability of the questionnaire design. The same set of steps that were used for the participant questionnaire pilot study was followed here and subsequent alterations made in accordance with the comments of the respondents. This primarily involved the insertion of a section enabling additional comments from the coaches after each question.

Coach Questionnaire Delivery Protocol

Each coach was requested to complete the questionnaires before the start of the Active

Sports sessions. In some cases more than one coach provided responses at the session

however, generally the questionnaires were administered on an individual basis. As with

the participant questionnaire, the same researcher carried out every delivery protocol and

began by providing information pertaining to the purpose of the survey and the confidential

nature of the process. The structure of the questionnaire was outlined by the researcher with

particular attention given to the opportunity provided for the coach to give any personal

comments that they felt were relevant to each Likert scale question. The researcher

remained with the coach throughout the completion of the form in order to provide

assistance if necessary and, once the process was completed, thanked the coach for his/her

assistance in the research.

As with the participant questionnaires, the completed coach questionnaires were collected

and their contents stored on a Microsoft Access database for ease of analysis (Oppenheim,

2000). Confidentiality of the information was again ensured by storage of the original

questionnaires in a locked cabinet.

Participant Interview Design

The process of designing an interview is similar to designing a questionnaire in that it must

result in an instrument that produces the required information to address the research

question (Marshall, 1999). In this case, that involved obtaining details of the participant's

sports involvement, the influence of his/her family on that involvement, their sporting preferences, level of ability and fitness, method of travel, views on sport and suggestions for improving the programme. These areas of investigation were decided upon in order to generate the necessary information to address the portion of the research question relating to the sporting involvement of the participants and the factors influencing that involvement (Table 7).

The participant interviews were of a structured nature with a combination of open and closed questions in a set order. This order grouped questions about each of the aforementioned concepts together in order to produce logical sequencing throughout the interview (Ruane, 2004). The sequence of interview questions began with those of a simple ethnographical nature, requiring the respondent to give details of their name, age, address and sport played. These 'easy to answer' questions were asked first as a means of putting the participant at ease in an attempt to encourage the children to talk openly throughout the interview (Denscombe, 2003). The main body of the interview consisted of 31 questions. The majority of these questions were paired together in the form of one closed question followed by a more open ended question relating to the same subject. The questions were designed in this way to produce more detailed information e.g. Q.11 asks 'Do your parents encourage you to play sport?' if the response is 'yes', then the following question asks 'how do they do this?' According to Gratton (2004, p.147) this is known as an elaboration probe *'used to elicit a more in-depth response about a particular point related to the interview'*. On reflection however, it may have improved the study in terms of generating qualitative information if a less structured approach had been adopted, allowing both the participants and coaches more opportunity to share their views.

The content validity of the interview was established by carrying out a pilot study using the same four subjects who contributed to the participant questionnaire pilot study. The purpose of this was to ensure that the questions were clearly worded and understandable to the interviewee (Marczyk, 2005).

Participant Interview Delivery Protocol

Before any interviews were carried out, considerable preparation was required. The pilot study served to increase the interviewing experience of the researcher, which in itself can be a source of invalidity (Bentz, 1998). This is because, as the researcher improves with experience, the results of the interviews may change. In particular, the verbal information given at the start of the interview was thoroughly rehearsed in order to achieve clarity and consistency throughout the study (Fontana, 1998). Careful consideration was also given to the clothes that the researcher wore whilst carrying out the interview. As the interviewees were to be children, it was felt important that any possibility of intimidation should be eliminated (Hannabus, 1996). Consequently, it was decided that the researcher should wear the same Durham Sport Partnership uniform as the coaches with whom the participants were already familiar.

As the interviews were of a structured nature with a mixture of open and closed questions asked in a set order, the investigator was able to use a standard form to record the responses of the participants, thereby increasing the reliability of the study (Appendix F). All of the interviews were carried out by one investigator in order to eliminate researcher error caused through the use of different approaches to the interview situation (Gratton, 2004). In

accordance with Child Protection regulations and Durham Sport policy, this investigator had undergone an enhanced full Criminal Records Bureau check. Subject error was reduced by conducting all of the interviews at the beginning of Active Sports activities and consequently eliminating the influence on responses of either a good, bad or indifferent experience during the session. In an attempt to negate subject bias through participants attempting to give answers that they believe the researcher wants, information was given regarding the anonymity of the interviews and the participants were instructed that there were no right or wrong responses to any of the questions.

All of the interviews took place at Active Sports venues and were made as informal and un-intimidating as possible by conducting them at the side of the playing area. This also ensured that the investigator was at no time alone with the subject. Participants were given basic standard age appropriate information regarding the nature of the research project, reasons for the interviews and a reassurance that if they did not understand any of the questions than it would be fully explained to them. Apart from providing useful information, this process also served to establish a rapport between the researcher and the interviewee. The questions were asked, beginning with simple ones of an identification nature to put the subject at ease and the responses recorded. Care was taken throughout the interviews to hold the attention of the participant and unless there was a problem with understanding, the information given and the wording and sequencing of the questions was identical throughout. At the end of the interview, the subjects were thanked for their co-operation and contribution to the study. The notes from the interview were then written up as soon as possible to ensure that the information was fresh in the mind of the researcher (Long, 2008).

Coach Interview Design

The coach interview was of a structured nature (Appendix G), designed to gather

information about the opinions of the coaches on several topics. The topics to be

investigated were the coach's knowledge of and opinions on the Active Sports initiative,

the impact of the initiative on their coaching, the participation and performance of the

children and any suggestions they might have to improve the scheme. These areas of

investigation were established in order to address the portion of the research question

pertaining to the impact and suitability for purpose of the initiative. In order to produce

this information, the interview consisted of 12 open questions. Again, consideration was

given to the sequencing of the questions which resulted in the interview opening with the

generic question 'What is Active Sports?'. This gave the interviewee the opportunity to

demonstrate their knowledge of the initiative but also encouraged them to enter into

conversation with the researcher. In this way, rapport was established between the

interviewer and the respondent as early as possible in the proceedings.

A pilot study was again carried out with Durham Sport Partnership staff to test the content

validity of the interview questions and to prepare the researcher for the implementation of

the interview schedule.

Coach Interview Delivery Protocol

The coach interviews were carried out at the site of the Active Sports activity, and for

reasons previously explained, took place before the start of the session. In this case, the

coach was asked to choose where the interview would take place so that they were completely comfortable with the environment in which they would answer the questions (Bell, 2005). In all cases, the researcher had met the coach on at least one previous occasion, when administering the coach questionnaire. At that time it had been explained that follow-up interviews were part of the research project and that there was a possibility that the coach would be asked to take part in that process. This previous contact was invaluable in 'breaking the ice' with the coach and demonstrating the value of the interviews. Nevertheless, the interview began with the researcher giving details of the structure of the interview, which outlined and justified the areas for investigation and an assurance of confidentiality of the information provided. During the interview, the interviewees were encouraged to express their opinions and provide as much information as possible. The researcher was keen to appear to be a good listener but was also aware of the need to keep to the structure of the interview (Hannabus, 1996). When the interview was completed, the coach was thanked for the contribution he/she had made to the research study and the researcher immediately began the process of writing up the interview notes. This concludes the examination of the methodology selected for use in this study. The next chapter of this thesis will present the results obtained through the employment of the chosen methodology.

Chapter 4

Results

Results

The first section of this chapter presents the quantitative data gathered through registration forms completed by participants and coaches during the four years (2000-2004) of the Active Sports programme in the Durham Sport area. The statistics obtained are compared by sport and in total with the equity targets for both participating children and coaches. These results will form the basis from which the performance of the initiative will be assessed in relation to how successful it was in achieving those targets. Subsequent sections present and analyse the qualitative data obtained through questionnaires and interviews. This qualitative information will be used to address the issues of the quality of the coach and participant experience of Active Sports, the sporting involvement of participants and the influences on that involvement, and the impact and suitability for purpose of the initiative. Ultimately, the sum of this information will build towards fulfilling the objective of the study in addressing the question of whether Active Sports succeeded in providing the first step to sporting excellence.

The statistics outlined below represent the results of quantitative research regarding the participating children and coaches in the Active Sports programme. The information was collected using registration forms as described in the methodology chapter and as this registration was a pre-requisite to participation, the children and coaches represent the whole population of the study rather than a selected sample.

Participants and Gender

During the four year duration of the study (Sept. 2000 – Sept 2004) a total of 6012 children (2814 males, 3198 females) registered on the Active Sports initiative in the Durham Sport

region. Table 9 shows the distribution of these participants by sport and gender.

Specifically, this table sets out the following information:

- The number of participants registered in each sport by gender.

- The percentages of male and female participants registered in each sport.

- The Durham Sport gender target in each sport in parenthesis.

Table 9: Participants and targets (in parenthesis) by gender and sport

	Male		Female	
Sport	No.	% of total	No.	% of total
Hockey	438	41 (50)	643	59 (50)
Netball	1	0.002 (No target)	610	99.998 (No target)
Cricket	495	87 (90)	71	13 (10)
Tennis	496	56 (60)	386	44 (40)
Rugby Union	530	79 (70)	139	21 (30)
Rugby League	249	70 (50)	107	30 (50)
Swimming	75	47 (50)	86	53 (50)
Girls' Football	0	0 (No target)	736	100 (No target)
Athletics	375	49 (50)	391	51 (50)
Basketball	51	86 (75)	8	14 (25)
Other (Partnership games registration only)	104	83 (No target)	21	17 (No target)
Total	2814	47	3198	53
Grand Total	6012			

These figures show that overall, 47% of participants were male and 53% female. However, when the figures are adjusted to exclude the sports which were not given a gender target (netball and girls' football), the distribution becomes 60% male and 40% female. Individually in terms of male participation, the sports of hockey, cricket, tennis, swimming and athletics failed to meet the set target. However, only hockey delivered a significant shortfall (9%). Rugby Union, basketball and rugby league failed to meet female gender targets with respective discrepancies of 9%, 11% and 20%.

Participants and Area of Residence

Figure 8 shows the percentage of participants in each sport whose post code indicated that they lived in an area of deprivation.

Figure 8: Participants by sport and area of residence
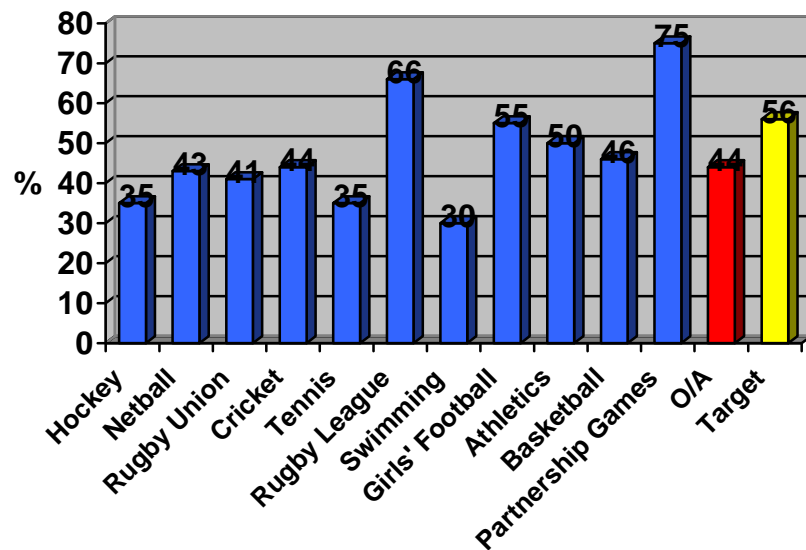
Overall, 44% (2648) of participants lived in an area of deprivation compared with a

partnership target for Durham Sport of 56% which was uniformly applied to all sports. The

only individual sport to exceed the set target was rugby league (66%) although girls'

football participation was only 1% below the target at 55%. The sports which performed

least successfully in this regard were hockey (35%), tennis (35%) and swimming (30%), all

sports traditionally associated with higher class participation (UK Sports Council, 1997).

The percentage of children from areas of deprivation who registered as part of the

Partnership Games (Others) and not in any individual sport, far exceeded the 56% target

(75%). The games had a positive influence on the overall deprivation statistics but, because

of the 'one-off' nature of this activity, this may be misleading.

Figure 9 indicates the number of participants who reported living outside the boundaries of

the Durham Sport region.

Figure 9: Participants living out of the Durham Sport area by sport
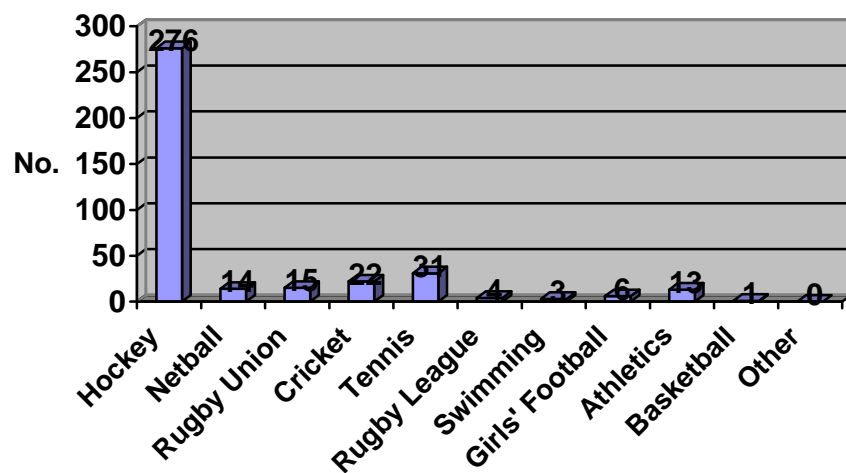
Data gathered from the registration forms revealed that 385 (6%) children resided outside

the boundaries of the Durham Sport area (Figure 9) and as the target of 56% was

specifically formulated using the demographics of this area they were consequently omitted

from the area of deprivation statistics.

As Figure 9 shows, the majority of registered children from outside the Durham Sport

boundaries (276) took part in hockey and this represents 26% of the total hockey

participants. This situation is the probable result of the existence of facilities in close

proximity to, but outside the partnership area. The inclusion of these participants could

have significantly improved the area of deprivation profile of hockey however, it would not

have improved the overall performance of the initiative sufficiently to achieve the

partnership target.

Participants and Disability

Table 10 represents the percentages of registered children in each sport with a disability

together with the regional targets for this group.

Table 10: Registered children with a disability by sport

Sport	No.	% of total	Target %
Hockey	16	1.5	2
Netball	5	0.8	2
Cricket	3	0.5	2
Tennis	18	2	2
Rugby Union	17	2.5	2
Rugby League	1	0.3	2
Swimming	0	0	2
Girl's Football	1	0.1	2
Athletics	4	0.5	2
Basketball	0	0	2
Other (Partnership games registration only)	125	100	2
Total	**190**	**3.2**	**2**

The significant influence on the disability figures of the Partnership Games, which included modified sports, is identified by the 125 reported disabled athletes participating in this activity. Overall, 3.2% of participants reported having a disability compared with a partnership target of 2%. However, when the 125 disabled participants who took part in the Partnership Games are disregarded, this falls to 1%. Individually, only tennis (2%) and rugby union (2.5%) met the set disability target, with swimming and basketball failing to register any disabled children.

Participants and Ethnicity

The following table shows the number of children registered for Active Sports activities from Black or Ethnic Minority (BEM) communities by sport. The percentages of the total participants are presented along with the partnership target for each sport.

Table 11: Children from a BEM community by sport

| Sport | BEM | | |
	No.	% of total	Target %
Hockey	24	2.2	1
Netball	17	2.8	1
Cricket	10	1.8	1
Tennis	19	2.2	1
Rugby Union	8	1.2	1
Rugby League	3	0.8	1
Swimming	2	1.2	1
Girl's Football	9	1.2	1
Athletics	11	1.4	1
Basketball	0	0	1
Other (Partnership games registration only)	1	0.8	1
Total	**104**	**1.7**	**1**

The data regarding participants from BEM communities shows a much more even distribution than the figures for disabled participants. Overall, 1.7% of children were from BEM communities compared with a partnership target of 1%. Individually, all sports with the exception of rugby league (0.8%) and basketball (0%) exceeded the target, some (i.e. netball 2.8%, tennis 2.2% and hockey 2.2%) by a considerable margin.

Having considered background information for the participants, the following statistics represent the results of quantitative research regarding the coaches in the Active Sports programme.

Coaches and Gender

Over the four-year duration of this initiative (Sept. 2000 – Sept 2004), a total of 228

coaches registered on the Active Sports initiative in the Durham Sport region. Table 12

shows the distribution of these participants by sport and gender. Specifically, the table sets

out the following information:

- The number of coaches registered in each sport by gender.

- The percentages of male and female coaches registered in each sport.

- The Durham Sport gender target for coaches in each sport in parenthesis.

Table 12 shows the gender distribution of coaches as 56% male and 44% female. However,

similarly to the participant gender data, when netball which did not have a gender target is

disregarded, the distribution shifts considerably in favour of male coaches (77% male and

23% female).

Table 12: Coaches and targets by gender and sport

	Male		Female	
Sport	**No.**	**% of total**	**No.**	**% of total**
Hockey	13	46 (70)	15	54 (30)
Netball	3	5 (NA)	63	95 (NA)
Cricket	47	92 (95)	4	8 (5)
Tennis	8	67 (80)	4	33 (20)
Rugby Union	42	95 (70)	2	5 (30)
Rugby League	2	100 (50)	0	0 (50)
Swimming	1	20 (80)	4	80 (20)
Girl's Football	9	53 (50)	8	47 (50)
Athletics	3	67 (70)	1	33 (30)
Total	**127**	**56**	**101**	**44**
Grand Total	**228**			

Individually in terms of male coaches, both rugby codes and girls' football exceeded the

target, rugby union by 25%; however, male coaches were under-represented in hockey,

cricket, tennis, swimming and athletics. This obviously means that the exact opposite was

true of female coach representation and highlights a lack of female coaches in the

traditionally male dominated sports of rugby union, rugby league and football.

Coaches and Area of Residence

Figure 10 shows the percentage of coaches in each sport whose post code indicated that

they lived in an area of deprivation.

Figure 10: Percentage of coaches by sport and area of residence
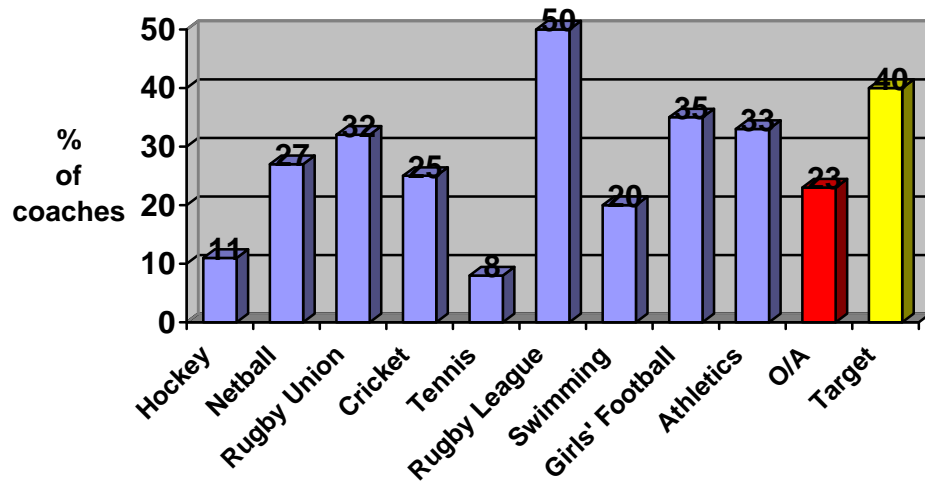
Overall, 23% (53) of registered coaches lived in an area of deprivation compared with a

regional target of 40%. Individually, as with participants, the only sport to exceed the target

was rugby league (50%). Again, the least successful sports in this regard were swimming (20%), hockey (14%) and tennis (8%) which mirrors the participant results indicating a link between the socio-economic backgrounds of participants and coaches in particular sports.

Figure 11: Coaches living out of the Durham Sport area by sport

Data gathered from the registration forms revealed that 58 (25%) of coaches resided outside the boundaries of the Durham Sport area (Figure11) and, as the target of 40% was specifically formulated using the demographics of this area, these coaches were consequently omitted from the area of deprivation statistics.
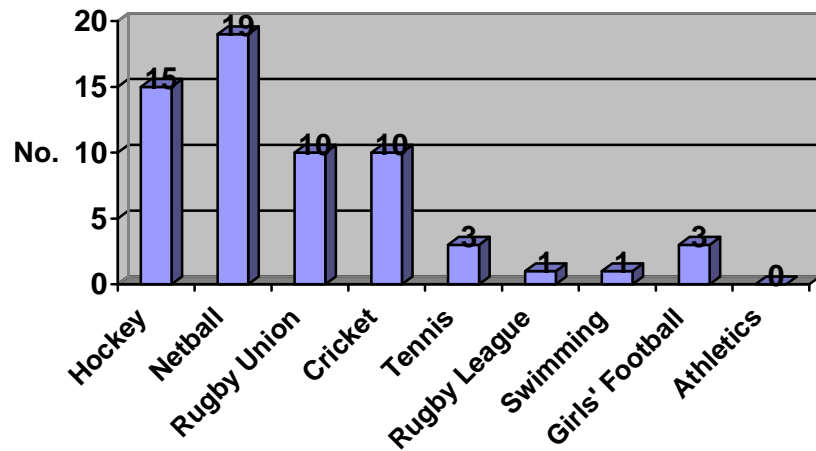
The sports with most coaches living outside the Durham Sport area were netball (19) and hockey (15). These figures represent 30% and 43% respectively of the total number of coaches registered in these sports. The high incidence of coaches living outside the partnership area is an indication of the need to recruit from throughout the north east to meet the requirements of the initiative and suggests a lack of locally qualified coaches.

Interestingly, the high proportion of hockey coaches living outside the area is reflected in the participation figures.

Coaches and Disability

Table 13 represents the percentages of registered coaches in each sport with a disability together with the regional targets for these groups.

The table shows that, although the regional disability target for coaches of 2% was narrowly missed (1.8%), only netball, rugby union and rugby league registered coaches with a disability and overall only four disabled coaches were actively involved in the initiative.

Table 13: Registered coaches with a disability by sport

Sport	Disability		
	No.	% of total	Target %
Hockey	0	0	2
Netball	1	1.5	2
Cricket	0	0	2
Tennis	0	0	2
Rugby Union	2	4.6	2
Rugby League	1	50	2
Swimming	0	0	2
Girl's Football	0	0	2
Athletics	0	0	2
Total	**4**	**1.8**	

Coaches and Ethnicity

The Durham Sport target for inclusion of coaches from a BEM background was set at 1%. However, the initiative failed to recruit any coaches from these groups. This may be because there is a lack of qualified coaches in the area or there may be a reluctance to integrate into an initiative in which ethnic groups were very much in the minority. This is worthy of further consideration.

Having reviewed the quantitative data collected through the registration forms, the next section will review the collection of qualitative data fro the questionnaires and interviews undertaken with both participants and coaches. The following outlines the results and findings of this research and each section begins with a description and justification of the selected sample.

Participant Questionnaire

Participant Questionnaire Sample

A total of 405 participants completed questionnaires, which represents a sample of 7% of all children taking part in the initiative. In order to ensure that all sub-groups within the overall population were represented in a way that mirrored the distribution of participants within these groups, stratified random sampling was used. The key sub-groups that were considered when conducting the stratified random selection process were sport, gender, and area of residence as the results will be analysed using these dependent variables.

Throughout the collection of questionnaire data, the mix of the questionnaire sample was regularly monitored and compared with overall initiative participation trends in order to highlight under representation of individuals from each sub group. This enabled the researcher to target participants from particular sports, genders and areas of residence to ensure the representative nature of the sample. The following tables detail the distribution of the sample in relation to each of these variables.

Table 14: Participant questionnaire sample percentages by port (overall initiative percentages in parenthesis)

Hockey	Netball	Cricket	Tennis	Rugby Union	Rugby League	Swimming	Girls' Football	Athletics	Basketball
17% (18%)	11% (10%)	8% (10%)	13% (15%)	10% (11%)	8% (6%)	4% (3%)	14% (13%)	12% (13%)	2% (1%)

As the table shows, although there are some discrepancies between the participant sample percentages by sport and those of the whole programme, they are not large (maximum 2%).

Table 15: Participant questionnaire sample percentages by gender (overall initiative percentages in parenthesis)

	Hockey	Netball	Cricket	Tennis	Rugby Union	Rugby League	Swimming	Girls' Football	Athletics	B'ball	Total
Male	59% (41%)	0% (0%)	93% (87%)	53% (56%)	76% (79%)	85% (70%)	44% (47%)	0% (0%)	42% (49%)	75% (75%)	47% (47%)
Female	41% (59%)	100% (100%)	7% (13%)	47% (44%)	24% (21%)	15% (30%)	56% (53%)	100% (100%)	58% (51%)	25% (25%)	53% (53%)

The gender distribution of the sample shows that, when considered by sport, there are several discrepancies with the overall initiative. These were caused mainly by the difficulty experienced in targeting gender specific participants due to the random nature of attendance at Active Sports sessions. However, the overall gender distribution of the sample exactly matches that of the programme.

Table 16: Participant questionnaire sample percentages by area of residence (overall initiative percentages in parenthesis)

Hockey	Netball	Cricket	Tennis	Rugby Union	Rugby League	Swimming	Girls' Football	Athletics	B'ball	Total
39% (35%)	39% (43%)	57% (44%)	19% (35%)	46% (41%)	59% (66%)	33% (30%)	44% (55%)	50% (50%)	50% (46%)	42% (44%)

Again, and for the reasons already mentioned, there are some differences by sport between the sample and the overall programme. However, the total sample percentage of participants living in an area of deprivation (42%) is similar to that of the overall initiative (44%).

The results of the participation questionnaires will now be considered. These results are sub-divided into the 3 sections of: the Active Sports experience of the participants, their physical activity patterns, and their sporting preferences. This is to facilitate the analysis of the participant questionnaires using these independent variables. The data from travel and age questions are also presented for information, however these results will not be used in the analysis.

 Participant Questionnaire Results

Table 17 presents the results of the responses to the Likert scale statements regarding the

Active Sports experience of the participants. The numbers and percentages (in parenthesis)

of the responses of participants to each statement are shown.

Overall, these results show an extremely positive response by the participants to their

experience of the Active Sports sessions. For example, 96% reported having fun either all

or most of the time, 94% regarded their skill levels as having improved, and 69% made

new friends as a result of participating in the scheme.

It is evident from the responses that the experience of the participants can be characterised

as enjoyable, fulfilling and socially enhancing. With regard to the participants' perceived

quality of coaching, again this was positive, which is affirmed by 91% understanding what

they were supposed to be doing either all or most of the time, 98% reporting that the

coaches had taught them new skills, and 93% regarding the coaches as friendly at least

most of the time. On a more practical note, the standard of facilities was described as 'OK',

'not very good' or 'poor' by a rather less enthusiastic 30% of respondents. Nevertheless,

82% felt that the amount they paid for the activities was about right.

Table 17: Participants' Active Sports experience

Statement	Always No. (%)	Most Times No. (%)	Sometimes No. (%)	Not Often No. (%)	Never No. (%)
I have fun at Active Sports activities	192 (47)	199 (49)	11 (3)	3 (1)	0 (0)
I look forward to my next Active Sports activity	189 (47)	172 (42)	37 (9)	7 (2)	0 (0)
I understand what I am supposed to be doing	145 (36)	224 (55)	25 (6)	11 (3)	0 (0)
I am bored during Active Sports activities	3 (1)	7 (2)	42 (10)	193 (48)	160 (39)
The Active Sports coaches are friendly	239 (59)	137 (34)	25 (6)	4 (1)	0 (0)
	A Lot	Quite a Lot	Some	Not Much	Not At All
I have made new friends at Active Sports activities	144 (36)	134 (33)	78 (19)	24 (6)	25 (6)
Because of Active Sports, my skills have improved	188 (46)	168 (41)	40 (10)	5 (1)	4 (1)
The Active Sports coaches have taught me new skills	219 (54)	NA	179 (44)	NA	7 (2)
	Excellent	Good	OK	Not Very Good	Poor
The facilities used for Active Sports activities are	89 (22)	195 (48)	88 (22)	21 (5)	12 (3)
	Too Much	About Right	Not Enough		
The amount you pay for Active Sports activities is	47 (12)	332 (82)	26 (6)		

Table 18 presents the results of questions administered to participants regarding their

physical activity patterns.

Table 18: Participants' physical activity patterns

	Much More Often	**More Often**	**The Same Amount**	**Less Often**
Question	**No. (%)**	**No. (%)**	**No. (%)**	**No. (%)**
Because of Active Sports activities, I take part in sport	221 (54)	146 (36)	38 (10)	0 (0)
I would like to take part in Active Sports activities in the sport I play at the moment	NA	235 (58)	162 (40)	8 (2)
	Yes	**No**		
I would like to take part in Active Sports activities in more sports	309 (76)	96 (34)		
	Once	**2-10 Times**	**11-20 Times**	**> 20 Times**
How many times have you taken part in Active Sports activities?	22 (5)	145 (36)	97 (24)	141 (35)

The responses to these questions show that 95% of respondents had taken part in Active

Sports sessions more than once, with 59% taking part more than 10 times. However, 58%

reported that they would like more activities in their chosen sport. The vast majority (90%)

said that Active Sports has added to their sporting activity but 76% would still welcome the

opportunity to participate in more sports. Details of the participants' sporting preferences

are presented in Table 19.

Specifically, Table 19 shows the number and percentage of respondents expressing an

interest in participating in additional sports to their current Active Sport. Responses were

not restricted and some children indicated more than one sport.

Table 19: Additional sports

Sport	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Football	181	58
Rugby	76	25
Tennis	46	15
Basketball	42	14
Swimming	39	13
Athletics	37	12
Badminton	30	10
Rounders	28	9
Netball	24	8
Hockey	24	8
Cricket	21	7
Golf	12	4
Volleyball	8	3
Dancing	8	3
Table Tennis	7	2
Horse Riding	5	2
Ice Hockey	4	1
Rowing	4	1
Street Hockey	4	1
Karate	2	0.7
Canoeing	2	0.7
Squash	2	0.7

Unsurprisingly, considering its national popularity, football featured prominently in the responses of the participants. However, all of the sports already included in the initiative were also requested which could possibly indicate inadequacies in the recruitment process.

Of the sports not already included, football (for males) (58%), badminton (10%), rounders

(9%) and golf (4%) were the most popular.

Figure 12 indicates the age at which children reported first participating in active sports

activities.

Figure 12: Age at first participation
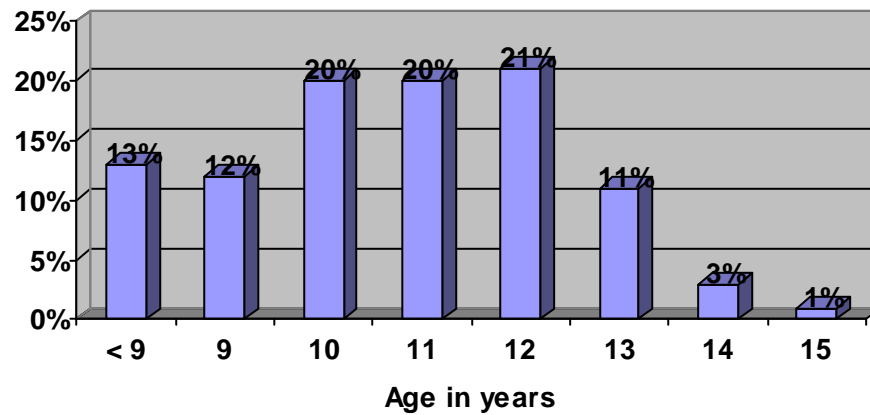
These results show that the majority (61%) of participants were first registered on Active

Sports between the ages of 10 and 12 years, which would seem to be appropriate to an

initiative designed to feed into elite sports programmes over a five year period.

Having presented the results of the participant questionnaire, the results of the

questionnaires administered to the Active Sports coaches will now be considered.

Analysis of Participant Questionnaire Results

The data gathered using participant questionnaires will be analysed around three criteria or dependent variables of sport, gender and area of residence. The predictor or independent variables (Marshall, 1999) used will be centered on the responses of the participants to three categories of questions. These are:

- Their Active Sports experience

- Their physical activity patterns

- Their sporting preferences

The Participants' Active Sports Experience

The responses to these multiple choice questions were scored in order to provide an average value for the answers of each participant. The scale of scoring depended on the number of available choices but always began with a score of 1 for the most negative response. The quality of the participants' Active Sports experience (independent variable) will now be considered by sport (dependent variable).
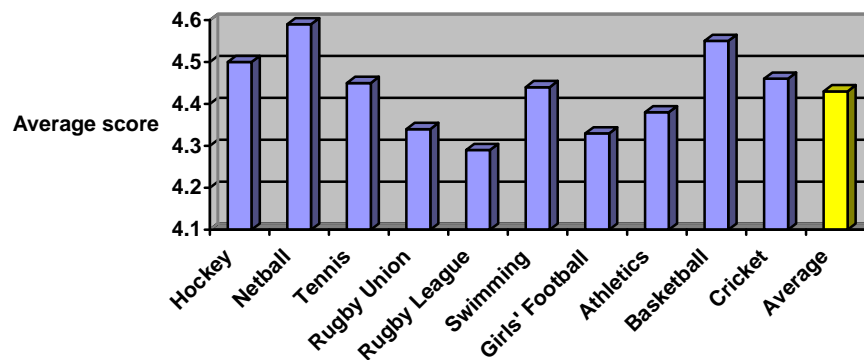
Figure 13: Fun and sport

Figure 13 shows how the participants rated the Active Sports sessions in each sport for the level of fun they experienced. The maximum score attainable was five and although the ratings were generally good with netball (4.59) and basketball (4.55) attaining the highest scores, rugby league (4.29), rugby union (4.34), athletics (4.38) and girls' football (4.33) fell below the overall average of 4.43.

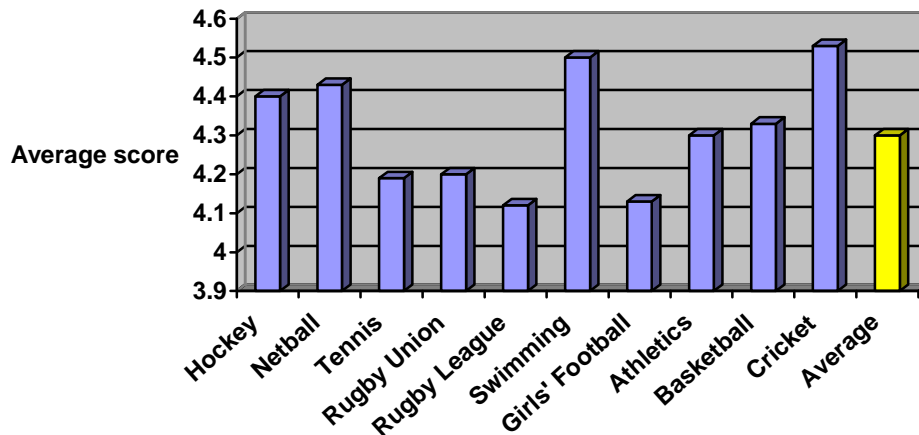Figure 14: Looking forward to the next session and sport

Figure 14 represents how much the participants look forward to their next Active Sports session and as such indicates the level of enthusiasm they have to take part. The maximum score was five and again the ratings were generally high. In this case those participating in cricket (4.53), swimming (4.50) and netball (4.43) gave the most positive responses whilst those taking part in rugby league (4.12), girls' football (4.13), tennis (4.19) and rugby union (4.20) showed the least enthusiasm for participation.
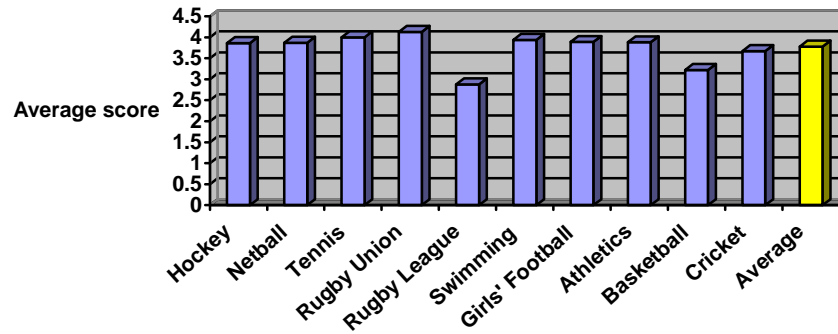
Figure 15: Making new friends and sport

Figure 15 indicates how the participants responded to the statement 'I have made new friends at Active Sports activities' and is categorised by sport. The available responses ranged from 'a lot' to 'none' and the maximum rating was five. The scores across the sports were in general quite uniform with the notable exception of rugby league with a rating of 2.88 against an average of 3.78. A possible explanation for this is that the stage 1 rugby league activities were all delivered in school during curriculum time and therefore the opportunity for the participants to make 'new' friends was less than in sports delivering the sessions in clubs.

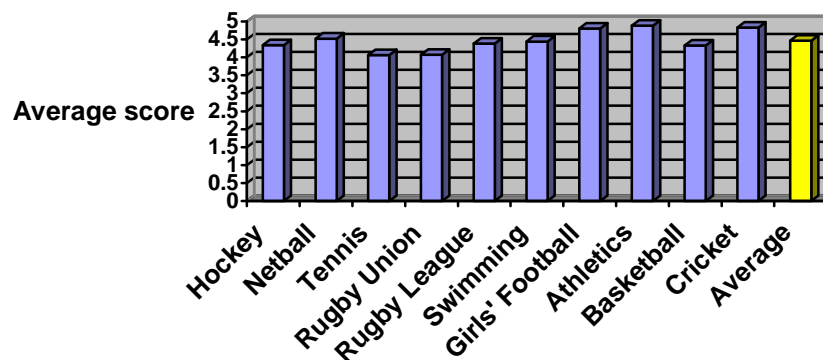Figure 16: The friendliness of the coaches and sport

Figure 16 is a representation of the opinions of the participants regarding the friendliness of the Active Sports coaches. The children were asked to respond to the statement 'The Active Sports coaches are friendly' by choosing between options ranging from 'all of the time' to 'never' with a maximum possible rating of five. The results indicate that the coaches in all sports were regarded as friendly with an average score of 4.46. Only tennis (4.06) and rugby union (4.07) were allocated scores much below the average.

Figure 17: The understanding of the participants and sport
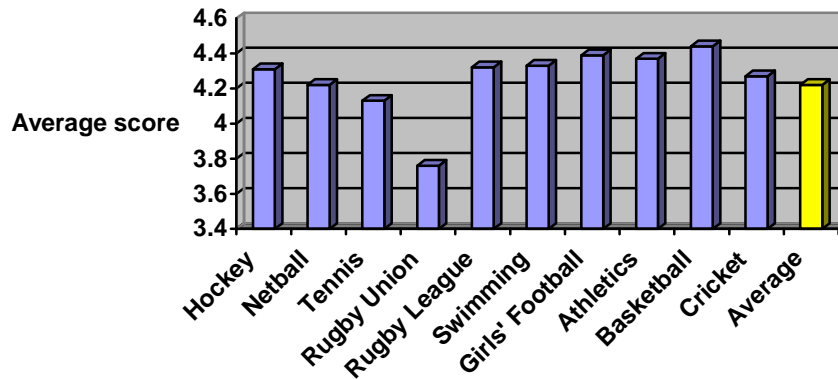
Figure 17 represents the level of understanding of the tasks that the participants were asked to perform during Active Sports sessions. Specifically, the children were asked to respond to the statement 'during Active Sports activities, I understand what I am supposed to be doing' and had options ranging from 'all of the time', scoring 5 to 'never', scoring 1. The level of understanding reported by the participants was high for all sports (average 4.22), with the exception of rugby union players who only rated their understanding as 3.76 out of a possible 5.

Figure 18: New skills and sport
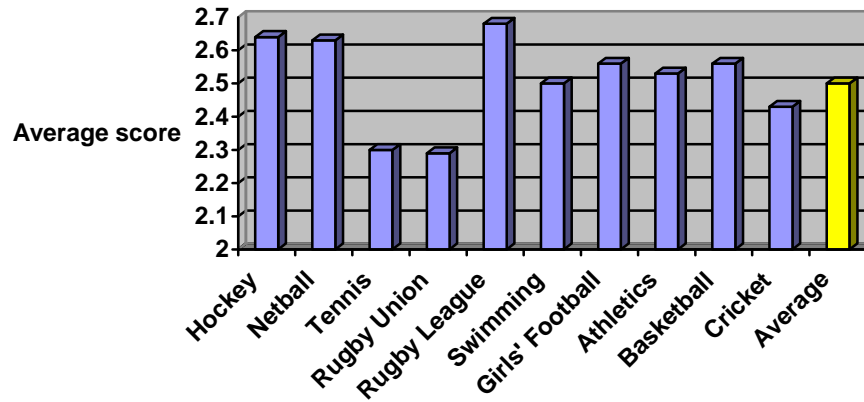
Figure 18 shows the results of the children's responses to the statement 'the Active Sports coaches have taught me' and the options 'a lot of new skills', scoring 3, 'some new skills', scoring 2 and 'no new skills', scoring 1. The average rating was 2.5, with rugby league (2.68), hockey (2.64) and netball (2.63) scoring particularly highly. Tennis (2.30) and rugby union (2.29) players reported learning fewer new skills than the other Active Sports.

Figure 19: Skill improvement and sport

Figure 19 graphically represents the opinions of the participants regarding how much their skills have improved as a result of the Active Sports initiative. The children were required

to consider the statement 'because of Active Sports activities, my skills have improved' and choose from responses ranging from 'very much', scoring 5 to 'not at all', scoring 1. Participants in basketball (4.56), netball (4.41) and girls' football (4.41) scored highest in this regard with the responses of the rugby union players (4.02) indicating the least improvement in their skills.
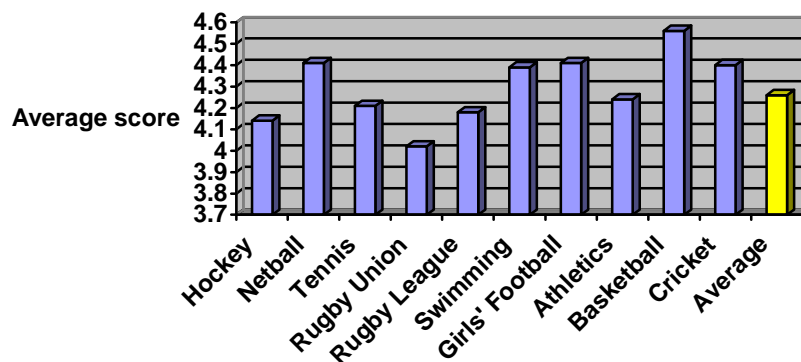
Figure 20: Participant boredom during activities by sport
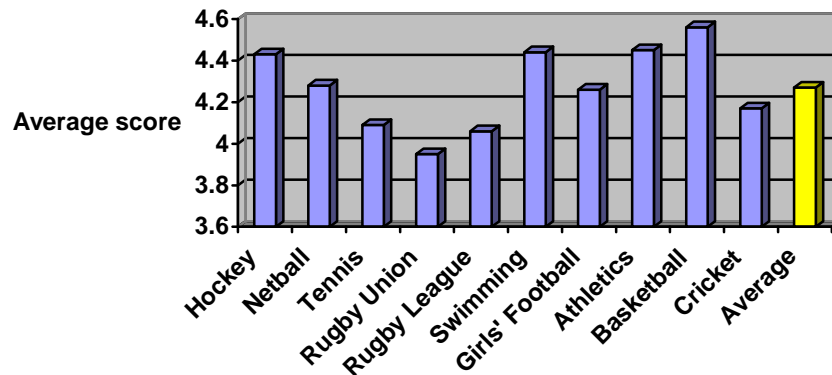
Figure 20 indicates the level of boredom reported by the children whilst participating in Active Sport sessions and indicates the amount of interest they had in the activities in each sport. These results were obtained by presenting the participants with the statement 'I am bored during Active Sports activities' and asking them to select a response ranging from 'never', scoring 5 to 'all the time', scoring 1. The activities delivered in basketball (4.56), athletics (4.45), swimming (4.44) and hockey (4.43) proved the most interesting to the children, whilst rugby union (3.95), rugby league (4.06) and tennis (4.09) were least successful in holding the attention of the participants.

Figure 21: Cost of sessions by sport
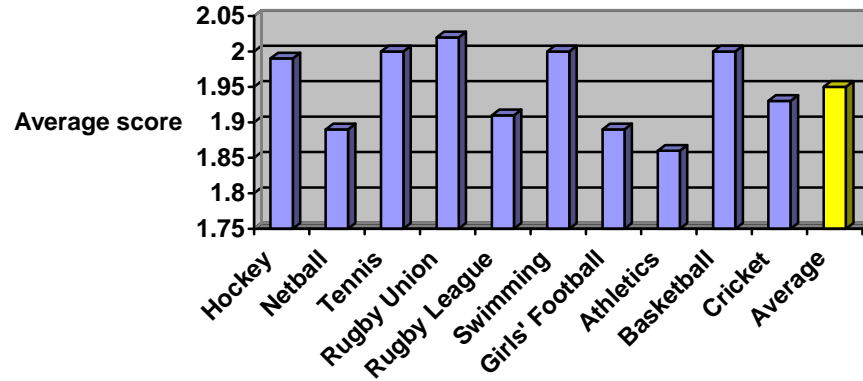
Figure 21 shows the results by sport of the investigation carried out to examine how appropriate the participants regarded the fee they paid for the Active Sports sessions. This fee was £1.00 per session for all sports and the responses of the children indicated if they judged the activities to be value for money. The statement they were asked to consider was 'do you think the amount you pay for Active Sports activities is' and the response choices were 'not enough', scoring 3, 'about right', scoring 2 and 'too much' scoring 1. Across all sports, the vast majority of children (82%) regarded the fee as 'about right', however, rugby union (2.02), swimming (2.00), basketball (2.00) and tennis (2.00) were regarded as the best value for money, and athletics (1.86), girls' football (1.89) and netball (1.89) the least.

Figure 22: Standard of facilities by sport
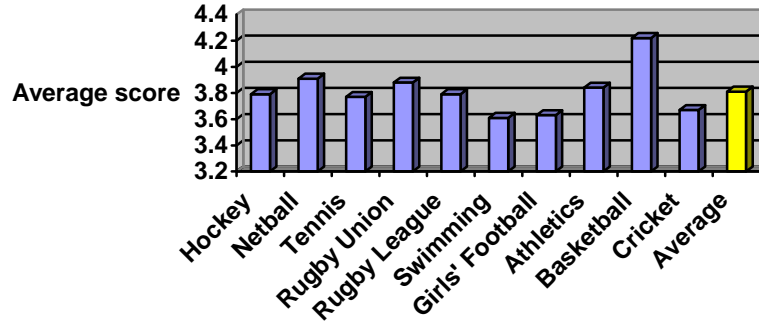
Figure 22 represents the opinions of the children regarding the standard of facilities used for the delivery of Active Sports activities. Participants were asked to rate the facilities from 'excellent', scoring 5 to 'poor', scoring 1. Basketball players rated the facilities used as the best (4.22) whilst swimming (3.61), girls' football (3.63) and cricket (3.67) received the most negative scores.

Figure 23: The overall participant Active Sports experience by sport
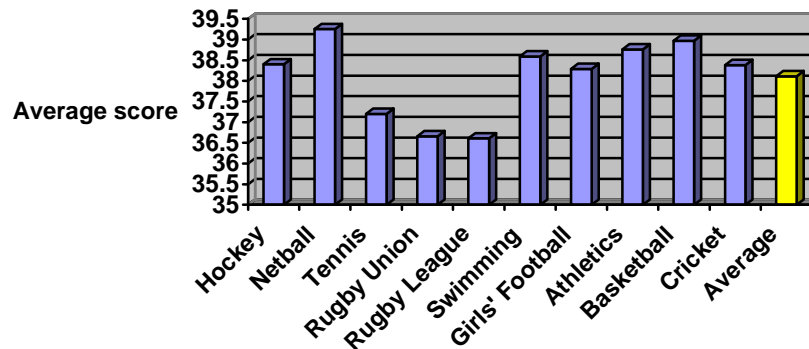
Figure 23 graphically represents the perceived quality of the overall Active Sports experience reported by participants in each sport. This chart was formulated by amalgamating the scores obtained by each sport for all of the participant Active Sports experience questions. The maximum score available was 46 and, the higher the score, the more positive the children's experience of the initiative in their particular sport. In this regard, netball (39.25), basketball (38.97) and athletics (38.76) players reported the most positive experience, whilst the responses of participants in rugby league (36.61), rugby union (36.66) and tennis (37.20) indicated the least positive experience.

The quality of the participants, Active Sports experience (independent variable) will now be considered by gender (dependent variable).

Figure 24: Fun, enthusiasm and making new friends by gender
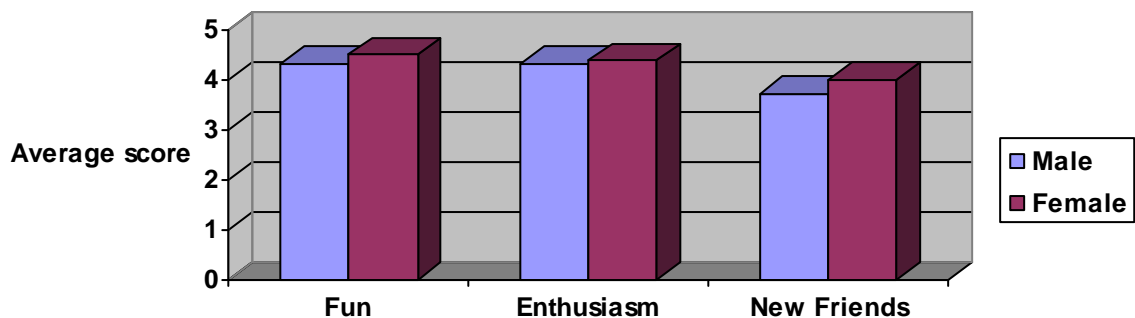
Figure 24 represents the opinions of the participants regarding the fun they have during Active Sports sessions, how much they look forward to the next session, and the number of new friends they have made as a result of Active Sports. Females (4.49) reported

experiencing higher levels of fun than males (4.31) and greater enthusiasm for taking part in the next session (F= 4.37, M= 4.30). Females also assessed the impact of the initiative on making new friends (3.99) as higher than males (3.71).

Figure 25: Friendliness of coaches and understanding of activities by gender
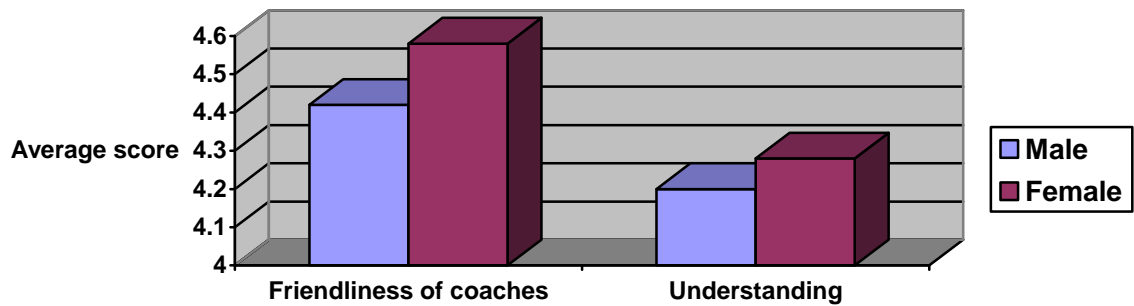
Figure 25 indicates by gender the children's perception of the friendliness of the Active Sports coaches. The results show that females (4.58) regarded the coaches as more friendly than males (4.42). The graph also demonstrates the level of understanding reported by the participants of the activities undertaken, classified by gender. In this regard, females (4.28) considered their understanding of the proceedings to be greater than males (4.20).

Figure 26: Skill acquisition and boredom by gender
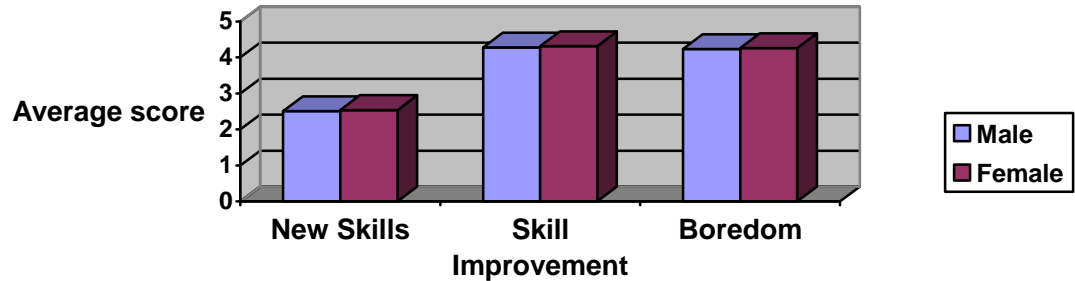
The results presented in Figure 26 consider gender in respect of the opinions of the children regarding the level of skill acquisition they attained during the course of the Active Sports sessions they had attended. In terms of new skills, the maximum score was three and females reported acquiring slightly more (2.54) new skills than males (2.51). Similarly, when asked about skill improvement, out of a maximum score of 5, females disclosed a slightly higher perceived level of skill improvement (4.31) than males (4.28). The levels of boredom revealed by gender mirrored the results for skill acquisition in that girls reported a marginally lower level of boredom (4.26) than boys (4.23) where the maximum score of 5 represented the participants never being bored during Active Sports sessions.

Figure 27: Cost and standard of facilities by gender
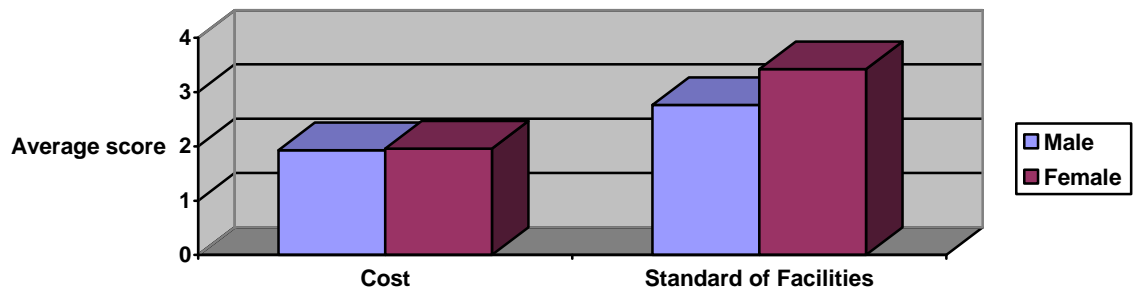
Figure 27 graphically reflects the assessment of the participants as to the appropriateness of the cost of the sessions and the standard of facilities employed for the delivery of activities. Females gave a slightly more positive reaction (1.96) to the level of cost than males (1.93) and a much more favourable assessment of the standard of facilities (M=2.76, F=3.42).

Figure 28: The overall Active Sports experience by gender
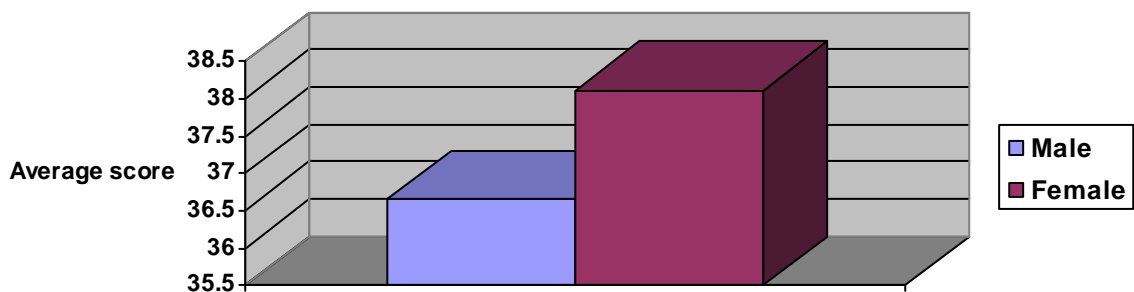
Figure 28 represents the perceived quality of the overall Active Sports experience reported by participants by gender. These results were formulated by combining the scores obtained by each gender for each of the participant Active Sports experience questions. The maximum score available was 46 and the higher the score, the more positive the children's

experience of the initiative. In this regard, female participants reported a more positive experience (38.11) than males (36.65).

The quality of the participants Active Sports experience (independent variable) as reported in the participant questionnaires will now be investigated in terms of area of residence (dependent variable). Each 'experience' question will be analysed against whether or not the respondent's post code indicated residence in an area of deprivation.

Figure 29: Fun, enthusiasm and making new friends by area of residence
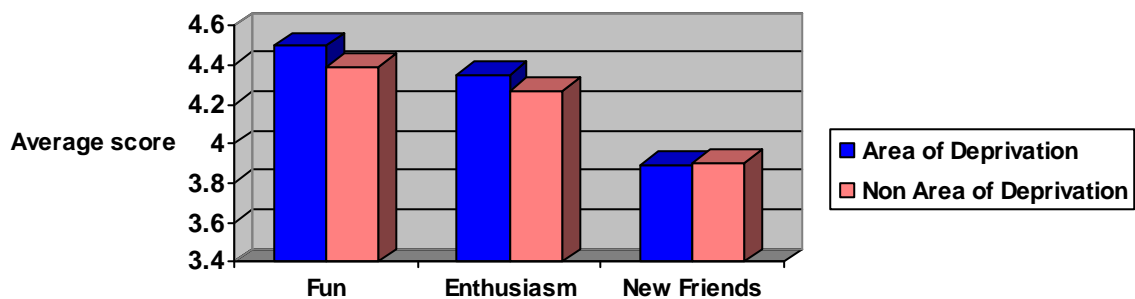
This chart assimilates the opinions of the participants with respect to their perception of how much fun they experienced during Active Sports activities, their level of enthusiasm for attending subsequent sessions, and how many new friends they made during their engagement with Active Sports. The data are categorised by whether or not the respondents live in an area of deprivation. Participants residing in areas of deprivation reported having more fun (4.50) than those who did not (4.39), and being more enthusiastic about attending sessions (area of dep. = 4.35, non area of dep. = 4.27). However, the same participants

reported making slightly fewer new friends (3.89) than those living in less deprived areas (3.90).

Figure 30: Friendliness of coaches and understanding of activities by area of residence
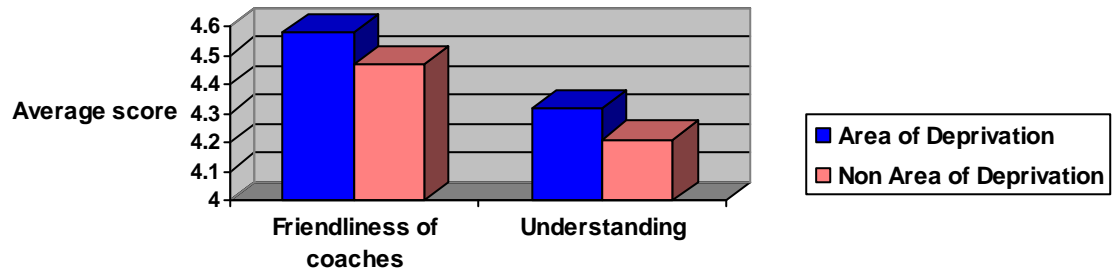
The data presented in Figure 30 indicates to what extent the participants regarded the coaches as friendly and the respondents perceived level of understanding of the activities in which they engaged. This information is analysed by the socio-economic area of residence of the children. Those living in an area of deprivation expressed the opinion that the coaches demonstrated a higher level of friendliness during the sessions (4.58) than those who did not (4.47). Furthermore, the respondents from the lower socio-economic areas of residence reported a greater level of understanding of the activities (4.32) than participants from more affluent areas (4.21).

Figure 31: Skill acquisition and boredom by area of residence
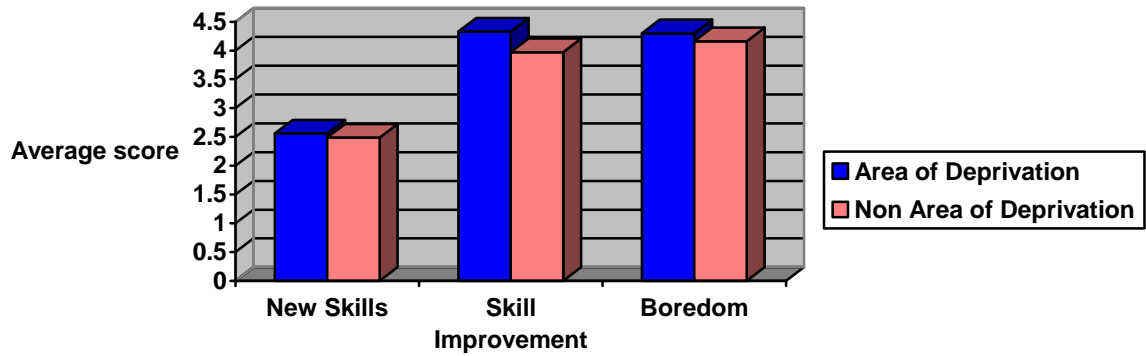
Figure 31 is a representation of the level of skill acquisition understood to have taken place by the participants categorised by area of residence. Data are also presented pertaining to levels of boredom when taking part in Active Sports activities. Respondents residing in an area of deprivation reported developing more new skills (2.56) than their counterparts (2.49) and also a greater level of skill improvement (area of dep. =4.33, non area of dep. =3.97). In the case of perceived boredom, children from deprived areas reported lower levels (4.30) than those from non deprived areas (4.16) where a score of 5 represents a child 'never' experiencing boredom.

Figure 32: Cost and standard of facilities by area of residence
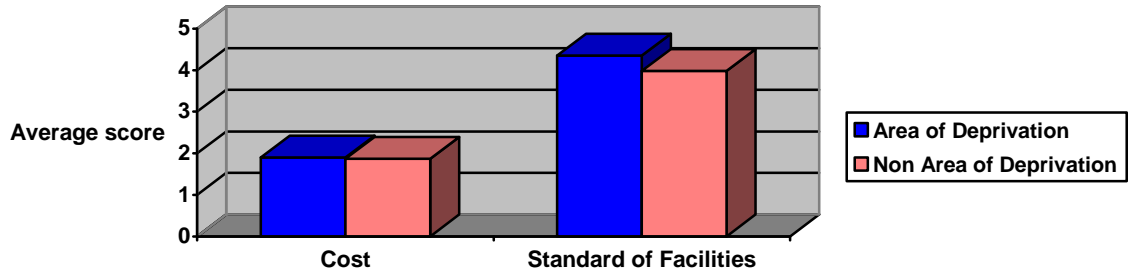
This chart reflects the views of the participants regarding the amount of money they were required to pay to attend the Active Sports sessions and the standard of facilities in which the sessions took place. This information is categorised by area of residence and indicates that those children living in an area of deprivation viewed the cost as slightly more appropriate (1.90) than those who did not (1.87). Furthermore, the results show that respondents from deprived areas considered the facilities to be of higher quality (4.35) than participants from non deprived areas.

Figure 33: The overall Active Sports experience by area of residence
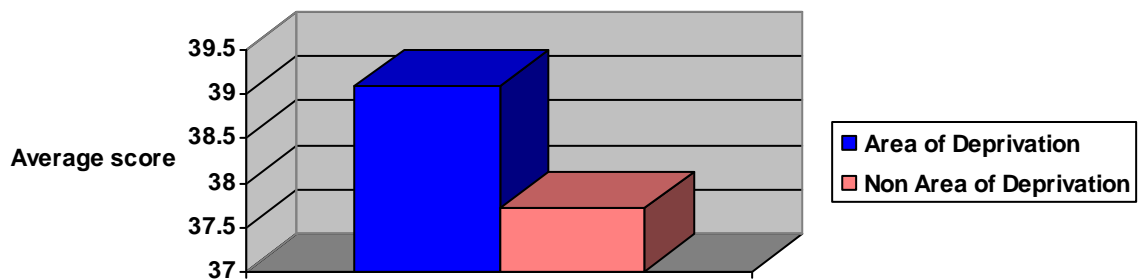
Figure 33 represents the perceived quality of the overall Active Sports experience reported by participants by area of residence. These results were formulated by combining the scores reported by those children residing in areas of deprivation and those living in non-deprived areas for each of the participant Active Sports experience questions. The maximum score available was 46 and, the higher the score, the more positive the children's experience of the initiative. In this regard, participants from deprived areas reported a more positive experience (39.08) than participants from non-deprived areas (37.11).

The Participants' Physical Activity Patterns

As with the Active Sport experience section of the questionnaire, responses to the multiple choice questions regarding the children's physical activity patterns were scored in order to provide an average value for the responses of each participant. The scale of scoring depended on the number of available choices beginning with a score of 1 for the most negative response. The impact of the Active Sport initiative (independent variable) on the respondents' activity patterns will now be considered by sport (dependent variable).

Figure 34: Level of sporting activity by sport
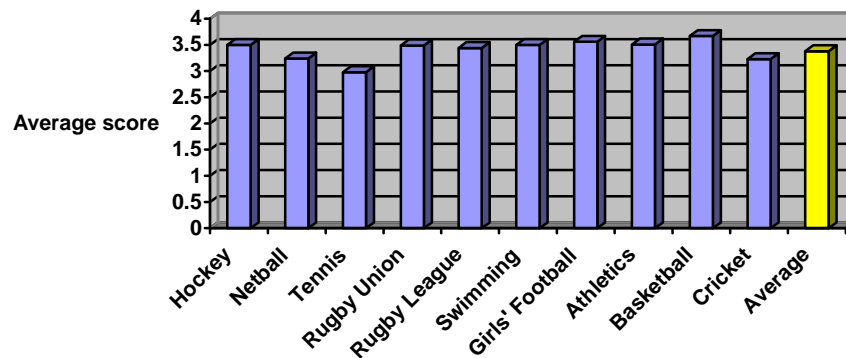
The participants in all sports reported an increase in sporting activity as a result of engaging with the Active Sports programme. The maximum score was four which indicated a response of 'much more often than before' to the statement 'because of Active Sports, I take part in sport'. Basketball (3.67) and girls' football recorded the highest average scores with tennis (2.98) and cricket (3.13) reporting the lowest averages.

Figure 35: Desire to increase activity in chosen sport
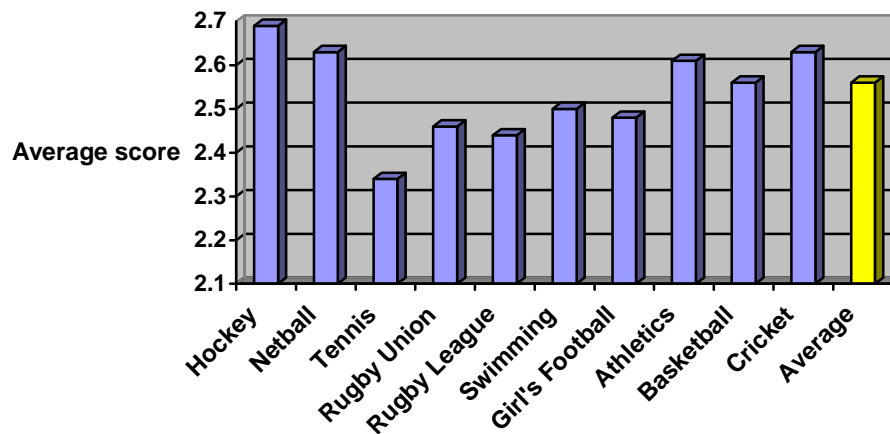
The statement that the participants were asked to respond to in this case was 'I would like to go to Active Sports activities in the sport I play at the moment' and the choices were 'more often' scoring 3 'the same amount of times' scoring 2 and 'less often' scoring 1. Hockey (2.69), netball (2.63) and cricket (2.63) players indicated the greatest willingness to increase the amount of activity they currently do in their chosen sport. Tennis (2.34) and rugby league (2.34) participants demonstrated the least willingness to increase their involvement.

Figure 36: Desire to participate in additional sports
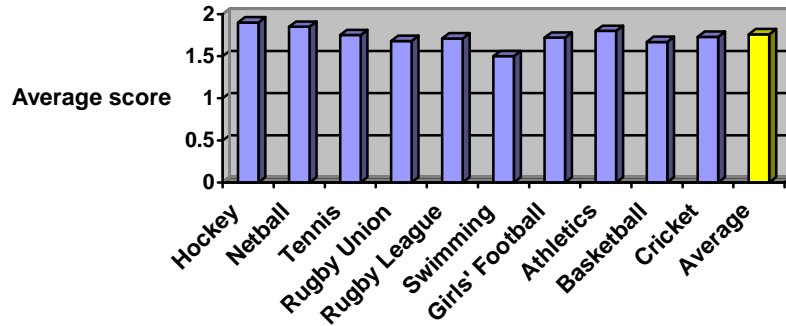
Figure 36 indicates the desire of the participants to take part in additional sports to the one in which they were engaged with at the time. They were asked to respond to the statement 'I would like to take part in Active Sports activities in more sports' with a simple 'yes' scoring 2 or 'no' scoring 1. Although the majority of children (76%) answered in the affirmative, those participating in hockey (1.90), netball (1.85) and athletics (1.80) attained the highest average scores. The averages for swimmers (1.50) and basketball players (1.67) were the lowest.

Figure 37: The overall impact of Active Sports on activity patterns by sport
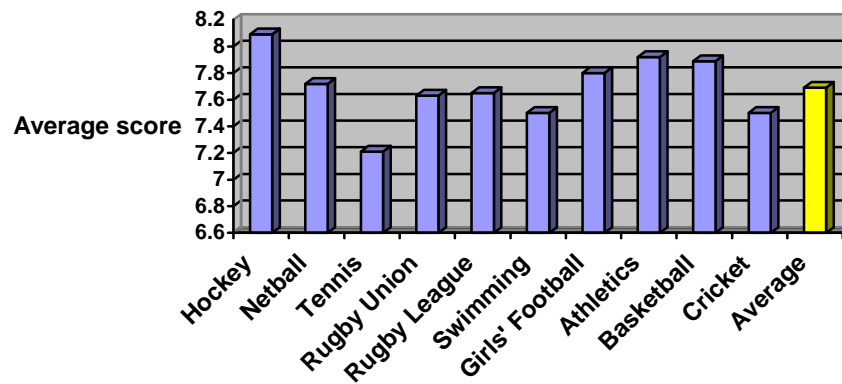
This chart amalgamates the information collected from the questionnaires regarding the activity patterns of the participants by sport. It is an indicator of the perceived impact of the Active Sports initiative in that it allocates a rating to the perceptions of the respondents of increased sporting involvement as a direct result of their engagement with the programme. Furthermore, it incorporates the participants' evaluation of their desire to participate further both in their chosen 'Active' sport and in additional 'Active' sports. The maximum possible score was nine and, as the figure describes, the sports with the most positive impact on activity patterns were hockey (8.09), athletics (7.92) and basketball (7.89). The least positive impact was reported by participants in tennis (7.21), swimming (7.50) and cricket (7.50).

The impact of the Active Sport initiative (independent variable) on the respondents' activity patterns will now be considered by gender (dependent variable).

Figure 38: Level of sporting activity by gender
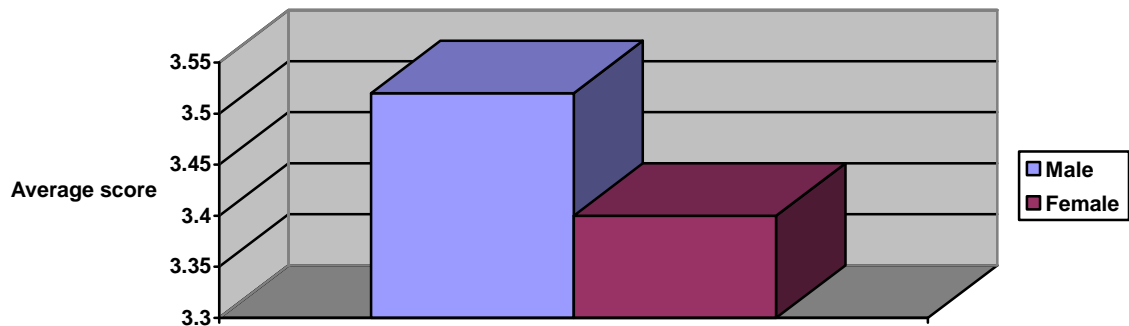
Figure 38 reflects the opinions of the participants regarding the change in the amount of sporting activities undertaken as a result of the Active Sports initiative. The response

choices to the statement 'because of Active Sports activities I take part in sport' were

'much more often than before' scoring 4, 'a bit more often than before' scoring 3, 'about

the same as before' scoring 2 and 'less than before' scoring 1. An average score of above 2

would therefore signify a positive response to the statement and indicate an increase in

sporting activity. As the chart shows, both genders responded positively with males (3.51)

reporting a greater increase in sporting activity than females (3.40).

Figure 39: Desire to increase activity in chosen sport by gender
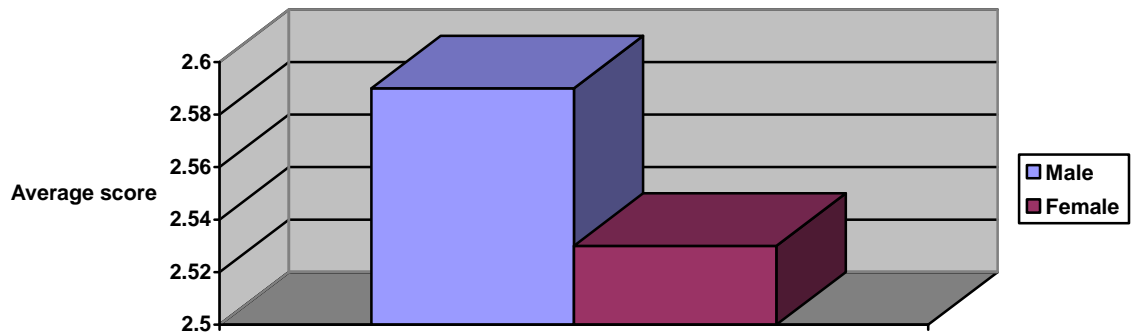
In this case an average score of above 2 which corresponded with the response 'the same

amount of times' to the statement 'I would like to go to Active Sports activities in the sport

I play at the moment' indicated a desire of the participant to increase the amount of

sessions they were attending in their chosen sport. Both genders expressed this desire with

males giving a more positive response (2.59) than females (2.53).

Figure 40: Desire to participate in additional sports by gender
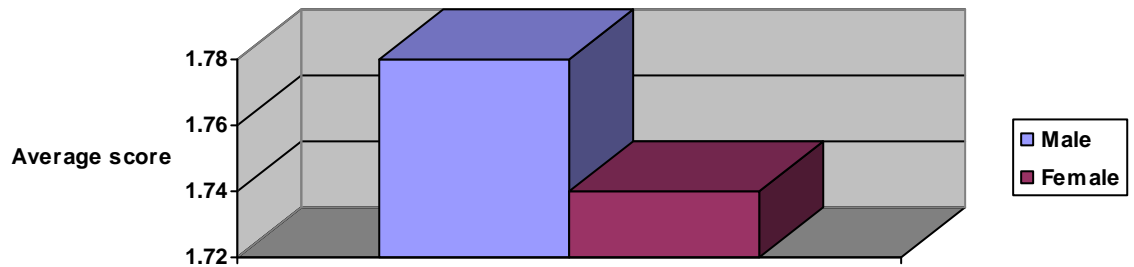
The yes (scoring 2) or no (scoring 1) responses to the statement 'I would like to take part in Active Sports activities in more sports' revealed that males (1.78) had a greater desire to participate in more than one sport than females (1.74).

Figure 41: Overall impact of Active Sports on sporting activity patterns by gender
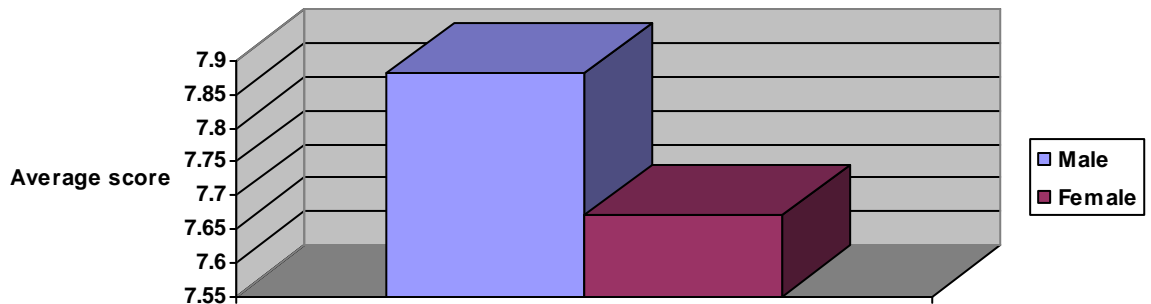
When the combined data collected from the activity pattern questions are analysed by gender, it reveals that males report a greater impact on their physical activity patterns as a result of engagement in the Active Sports programme (7.88) than females (7.67).

The impact of the Active Sport initiative (independent variable) on the respondents' activity patterns will now be considered by area of residence (dependent variable).

Figure 42: Level of sporting activity by area of residence
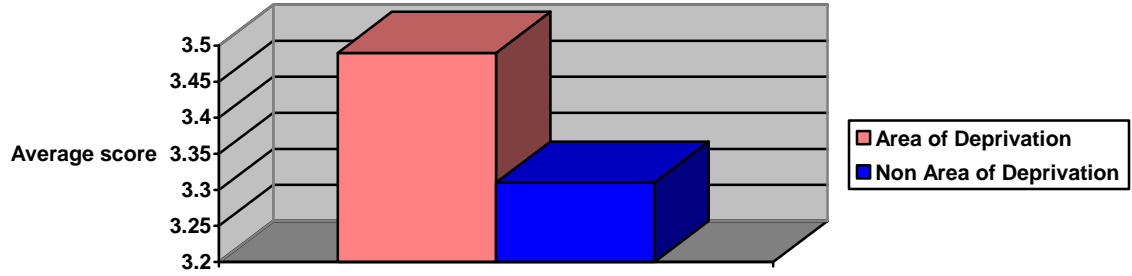
In this case an average score of above 2 which was the rating allocated to the response 'about the same as before' to the statement 'because of Active Sports activities, I take part in sport' constitutes a positive answer. As the chart shows, both groups of children reported an increase in sporting activity with those living in an area of deprivation declaring a higher increase (3.49) than their counterparts (3.31).

Figure 43: Desire to increase activity in chosen sport by area of residence
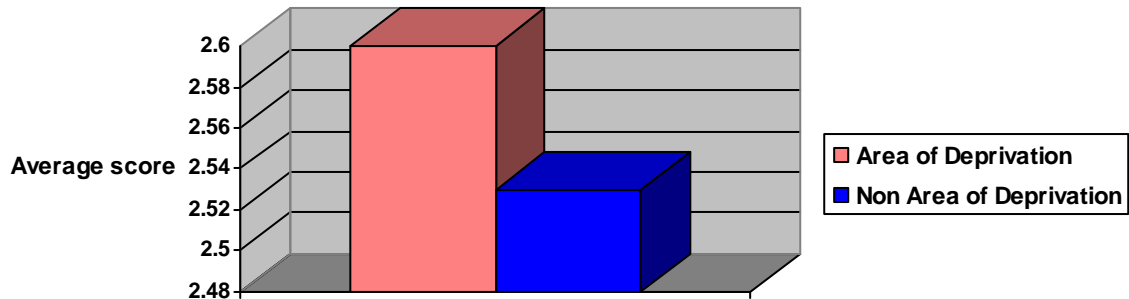
The children from deprived areas expressed a greater desire (2.60) to attend additional activity sessions in their chosen sport than those from non deprived areas (2.53). Both of these average scores are above the score of 2 which in this case is the threshold above which the responses could be regarded as positive.

Figure 44: Desire to participate in additional sports by area of residence
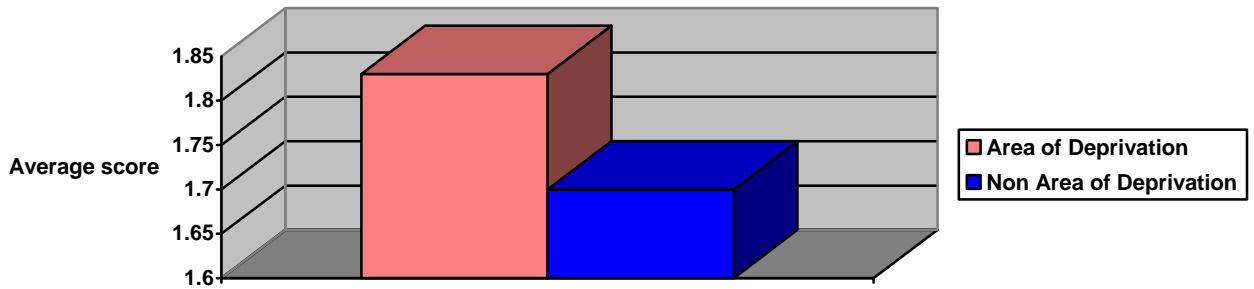
The results indicate a greater desire of participants from an area of deprivation (1.83) to take part in additional 'Active' sports than those from non deprived areas (1.70). The average scores were calculated from the children's responses to the statement 'I would like to take part in Active Sports in more sports' with 'yes' scoring 2 and 'no' scoring 1.

Figure 45: Overall impact of Active Sports on sporting activity patterns by area of residence
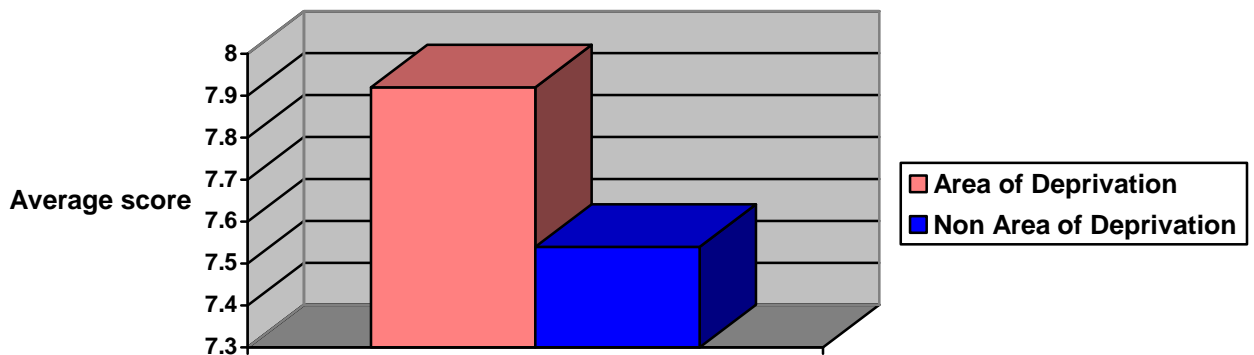
The combined average scores calculated for each of the activity pattern questions suggests that the respondents living in areas of deprivation experienced a more positive impact on

their sporting activity patterns (7.92) from the Active Sports programme than children

living in non deprived areas (7.54).

The sporting preferences of the participants (independent variable) will now be analysed by

sport (dependent variable).

The following table (Table 20) is designed to show the overall rank (1 to 21) of the

additional sports in which the respondents expressed a desire to participate. The main body

of the table then presents the numbers of participants indicating an interest in each sport

along with the consequent ranking it attained. The information is organised by sport in

order to highlight patterns of preference of participants in each of the 'Active' sports.

Preferences for certain sports were not available in some instances, the most obvious

example being evident in the case of football. Participants in all sports ranked football as

their favourite choice of additional sport with the exception of girls' football who because

they were already engaged in this activity could not choose it as an additional sport.

Table 20: Participant sporting preferences by sport

O/A Rank	Additional Sport	Hockey No. (Rank)	Netball No. (Rank)	Tennis No. (Rank)	Rugby Union No. (Rank)	Rugby League No. (Rank)	Swim No. (Rank)	Girls' Football No. (Rank)	Athletics No. (Rank)	B'ball No. (Rank)	Cricket No. (Rank)
1	Football	44 (1)	12 (1)	25 (1)	24 (1)	15 (1)	7 (1)		28 (1)	4 (1)	21 (1)
2	Rugby	23 (2)	4 (9)	7 (3)			6 (2)	10 (3)	15 (2)	2 (2=)	10 (2)
3	Tennis	6 (5=)	9 (3)		3 (3=)	5 (4)		14 (1)	5 (3=)		4 (3)
4	Basketball	3 (10)	1 (14=)	14 (2)	7 (2)	9 (2)		3 (8=)	4 (5=)		3 (4)
5	Swimming	9 (3)	7 (4)	5 (5=)	2 (7=)	4 (5)		7 (6)	4 (5=)	1 (4=)	
6	Athletics	6 (5=)	6 (5=)	6 (4)	3 (3=)	6 (3)		6 (7)			1 (8=)
7	Badminton	4 (8=)	6 (5=)	3 (9)	1 (10)	2 (7=)	1 (3=)	9 (4=)	4 (5=)	1 (4=)	
8	Rounders	4 (8=)	11 (2)					9 (4=)	2 (8=)		2 (5=)
9=	Netball	5 (7)		4 (8)	3 (3=)			11 (2)	1 (10=)		
9=	Hockey		5 (7=)	5 (5=)	3 (3=)	2 (7=)		1 (11=)	5 (3=)	1 (4=)	1 (8=)
11	Cricket	8 (4)	3 (10=)	5 (5=)	2 (7=)	2 (7=)			1 (10=)		
12	Golf			1 (10=)	2 (7=)	3 (6)	1 (3=)		1 (10=)	2 (2=)	2 (5=)
13=	Volleyball	2 (11=)	3 (10=)	1 (10=)					2 (8=)		
13=	Dancing		5 (7=)					3 (8=)			
15	Table Tennis			1 (10=)	2 (7=)			1 (11=)		1 (4=)	2 (5=)
16	Horse Riding		2 (12=)					3 (8=)			
17=	Ice Hockey		1 (14=)	1 (10=)		1 (11=)			1 (10=)		
17=	Rowing	2 (11=)				1 (11=)				1 (4=)	
19=	Street Hockey	1 (14)				2 (7=)					
19=	Karate		1 (14=)			1 (11=)	1 (3=)				
21=	Canoeing		1 (14=)						1(10=)		
21=	Squash		2 (12=)								

Participants in both rugby codes could not rank rugby as an additional sport but nevertheless, this sport was ranked 3 or above by all sports except netball whose female participants made rugby their 9[th] choice. Tennis was ranked highly (5 or above) against an overall position of 3[rd] in all sports with the exception of swimming and basketball. Swimming also featured prominently in the choices of participants in most sports (7 or

above) compared with an overall ranking of 5. However, no cricket players chose

swimming as an additional sport, despite the preferences of these participants being

remarkably similar to the overall rankings in that the first four choices corresponded

exactly with the overall results.

Figure 46: Average number of additional sports chosen by sport
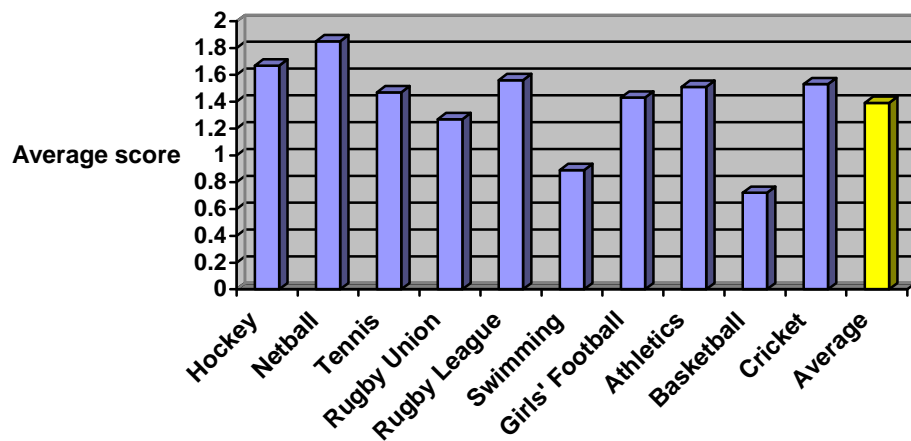
The average number of additional sports in which participants across all sports expressed

an interest was 1.39. Netball players reported the highest number of sports (1.85) with

swimmers (0.89) and basketball players (0.72) indicating the least interest in extending

their involvement in the initiative to other sports.

The sporting preferences of the participants (independent variable) will now be analysed by

gender (dependent variable).

The following table (Table 21) presents the preferences of the participants for additional sports by gender. The choices of sport are ranked overall and according to gender preference.

Table 21: Participant Sporting Preferences by Gender

		Male	Female
O/A Rank	Additional Sport	No. (Rank)	No. (Rank)
1	Football	109 (1)	72 (1)
2	Rugby	35 (2)	41 (2)
3	Tennis	18 (4)	28 (3)
4	Basketball	33 (3)	9 (10=)
5	Swimming	17 (5)	22 (6)
6	Athletics	16 (6)	21 (7=)
7	Badminton	9 (10)	21 (7=)
8	Rounders	2 (15)	26 (4)
9=	Netball	0	24 (5)
9=	Hockey	10 (9)	14 (9)
11	Cricket	12 (7=)	9 (10=)
12	Golf	12 (7=)	0
13=	Volleyball	1 (16=)	7 (13)
13=	Dancing	0	8 (12)
15	Table Tennis	5 (11)	2 (15=)
16	Horse Riding	0	5 (14)
17=	Ice Hockey	3 (13=)	1 (17=)
17=	Rowing	4 (12)	0
19	Street Hockey	3 (13=)	0
20	Karate	1 (16=)	1 (17=)
21=	Canoeing	0	2 (15=)
21=	Squash	0	2 (15=)

The sports ranked overall 1 and 2 (football and rugby) correspond with the sporting preferences for additional sports of both males and females. In the case of football, considering the popularity of the sport, it is no surprise that males expressed this preference as football was not offered as an Active Sport. However, even though football is a massive growth sport for females, it was already a featured sport in the initiative and therefore the achievement of top ranking suggests that females in the Durham Sport area were not receiving sufficient opportunity to participate.

Both genders rated rugby as their second preference as an additional sport. This was perhaps an unexpected result but when viewed in light of the time frame in which the questionnaires were administered (March 02 – March 04), it is less surprising as this coincided with the successful World Cup campaign of the England team in 2003.

The preferences of the respondents for the remaining nominated sports show several anomalies between the views of males and females. The most notable of these indicate that males rank basketball, golf, rowing and cricket much higher than females. This could be because, although females participate in these sports, they are traditionally male dominated, with the male version of the sport receiving much more media coverage than the female equivalent. In contrast, females report a greater preference for badminton, rounders, volleyball, dancing and horse riding, which are sports more readily associated with female participation.

Figure 47: Average number of additional sports chosen by gender
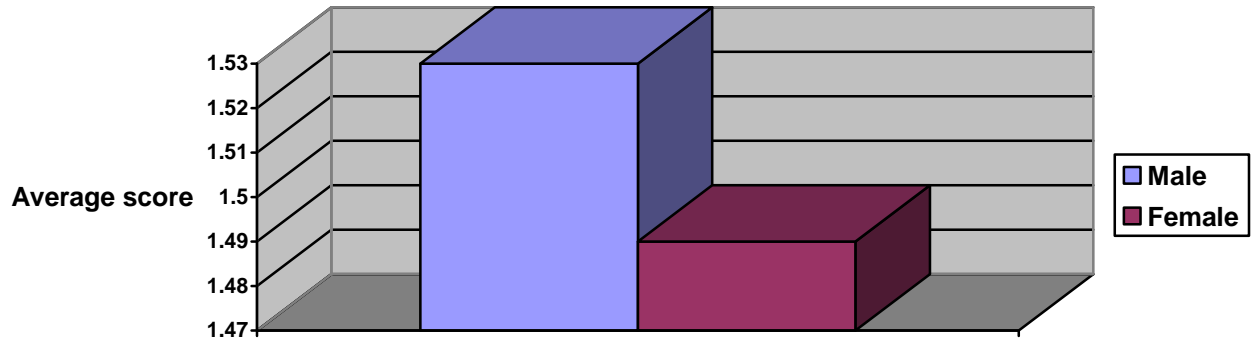
Although females reported wishing to take part in a wider range of additional sports (19) than males (17), the average number of additional sports in which males expressed an interest (1.53) was greater than females (1.49).

The sporting preferences of the participants (independent variable) will now be analysed by area of residence (dependent variable).

The following table (Table 22) presents the sporting preferences of the participants according to their area of residence. These preferences are ranked overall and by whether or not the respondents lived in an area of deprivation.

Table 22: Participant Sporting Preferences by Area of Residence

		Area of Deprivation	Non Deprived Area
O/A Rank	Additional Sport	No. (Rank)	No. (Rank)
1	Football	74 (1)	107 (1)
2	Rugby	39 (2)	37 (2)
3	Tennis	20 (3=)	26 (3)
4	Basketball	18 (5)	24 (4)
5	Swimming	20 (3=)	19 (6)
6	Athletics	16 (7)	21 (5)
7	Badminton	12 (8)	18 (7)
8	Rounders	17 (6)	11 (11)
9=	Netball	9 (10)	15 (8)
9=	Hockey	10 (9)	14 (9=)
11	Cricket	7 (11=)	14 (9=)
12	Golf	7 (11=)	5 (13=)
13=	Volleyball	3 (15=)	5 (13=)
13=	Dancing	2 (17=)	6 (12)
15	Table Tennis	4 (13=)	3 (15=)
16	Horse Riding	2 (17=)	3 (15=)
17=	Ice Hockey	1 (19=)	3 (15=)
17=	Rowing	4 (13=)	0
19	Street Hockey	3 (15=)	0
20	Karate	0	2 (18)
21=	Canoeing	1 (19=)	1 (19=)
21=	Squash	1 (19=)	1 (19=)

The data presented here illustrates considerable similarity between the sporting preferences of respondents residing in areas of deprivation and those from non deprived areas. Notably, participants from areas of deprivation regarded swimming, rounders, rowing and street hockey as more desirable additional sports than their counterparts. Although, in the case of swimming and rowing, this may signify a lack of opportunity due to the required facilities and equipment, rounders and street hockey are activities which involve little extra equipment or specialist facilities. Respondents from non deprived areas reported a greater interest in netball, cricket, dancing, ice hockey and karate. It is interesting to note that, with

the exception of swimming, all of the sports in which the two groups reported different

results, were minority sports not ranked in the top 7 overall. This would further suggest that

the similarities between the sporting preferences of the children from diverse socio-

economic groups are far greater than the differences.

Figure 48: Average number of additional sports chosen by area of residence
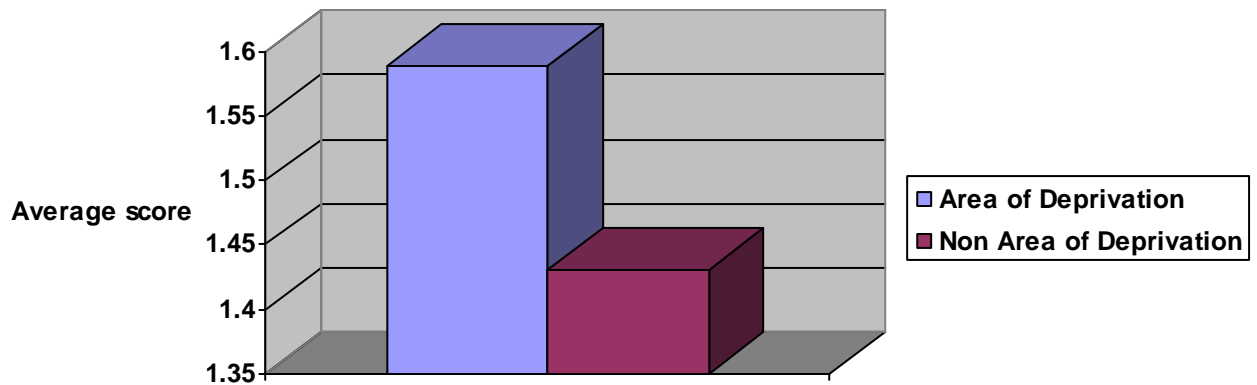
Figure 48 indicates the average number of additional sports in which participants would

like to take part. The information is categorised by whether or not they reside in an area of

deprivation and signifies a greater number of sports requested by respondents from an area

of deprivation (1.59) than those living in a non deprived area (1.43).

The sample of coaches and the results of the coach questionnaires will now be considered.

Coach Questionnaire Sample

A total of 39 coaches completed questionnaires, which represents a sample of 17% of all registered coaches. As with the participant sample, stratified random sampling was used to ensure appropriate representation of sub-groups within the overall coach population of the initiative. The groups that were considered were sport, gender and area of residence, and the following tables indicate the distribution of the sample in relation to each of these variables.

Table 23: Coach questionnaire sample percentages by sport (overall initiative percentages in parenthesis)

Hockey	Netball	Cricket	Tennis	Rugby Union	Swimming	Girls Football	Athletics
13% (12%)	28% (29%)	23% (22%)	5% (5%)	18% (19%)	3% (2%)	8% (7%)	3% (2%)

The coach questionnaire sample does not include representatives from basketball and rugby league. This is because, at the time the coach interviews were conducted, rugby league had only inducted two coaches and basketball none. Nevertheless, the distribution of the completed sample coach questionnaires by sport closely corresponds (+ or – 1%) with the spread of coaches by sport across the programme.

Table 24: Coach questionnaire sample percentages by gender (overall initiative percentages in parenthesis)

	Hockey	Netball	Cricket	Tennis	Rugby Union	Swimming	Girls Football	Athletics	Total
Male	40% (46%)	0% (5%)	100% (95%)	50% (67%)	100% (95%)	0% (20%)	33% (53%)	100% (70%)	54% (56%)
Female	60% (54%)	100% (95%)	0% (5%)	50% (33%)	0% (5%)	100% (80%)	66% (47%)	0% (30%)	46% (44%)

The representation of the sample by gender (m = 54%, f = 46%) is similar to the total percentage of inducted coaches (m = 56%, f = 44%).

Table 25: Coach questionnaire sample percentages by area of residence (overall initiative percentages in parenthesis)

Hockey	Netball	Cricket	Tennis	Rugby Union	Swimming	Girls Football	Athletics	Total
39% (35%)	39% (43%)	57% (44%)	19% (35%)	46% (41%)	33% (30%)	44% (55%)	50% (50%)	42% (44%)

The table shows the sample percentage of coaches living in an area of deprivation by sport as well as the overall initiative percentages. A comparison shows that the sample of coaches (42%) again closely matches the overall population (44%) in this regard.

Coaches Questionnaire Results

Table 26 outlines the responses to questions administered to coaches within the Active Sports programme. The questions were designed to assess the coaches view of the impact of the programme and each question began 'Active Sports makes/will make a valuable contribution to.......'On reflection however, this statement could have led the coaches into

more positive responses than a question asking for their views on how the initiative had

contributed in each area.

Table 26: Coach views on the impact of Active Sports

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Question	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
The development of sporting opportunities for children	23 (59)	12 (31)	4 (10)	0 (0)	0 (0)
The development of sporting talent	19 (49)	18 (46)	2 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Sports equity	15 (38)	17 (43)	7 (18)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Children's total physical activity	22 (56)	10 (26)	7 (18)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Talent identification	15 (38)	19 (49)	3 (8)	2 (5)	0 (0)
Coach development	18 (46)	19 (49)	2 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Club development	10 (26)	14 (36)	10 (26)	4 (10)	0 (0)
The number of potential world class athletes	5 (13)	16 (41)	11 (28)	7 (18)	0 (0)

The responses of the coaches to the questions regarding the impact of the Active Sports

initiative were generally very positive. The vast majority of coaches expressed the view

that Active Sports would make a valuable contribution to children's sporting opportunities

(90%), talent development (95%), sports equity (81%), total physical activity (82%), talent

identification (87%) and coach development (95%). The areas in which the responses were

less emphatic were the contribution of the scheme to club development (62% positive) and

the number of potential world class athletes (54% positive).

Table 27 represents responses of the coaches to questions regarding the participants during

Active Sports sessions.

Table 27: Coach views on the Active Sports experience of the participants

Question	Strongly Agree No. (%)	Agree No. (%)	Unsure No. (%)	Disagree No. (%)	Strongly Disagree No. (%)
The children have fun	18 (46)	21 (54)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
The children would take part in more activities in my sport	11 (28)	20 (51)	8 (21)	0 (0)	0 (0)
The children appear to understand what is required of them	9 (23)	27 (69)	3 (8)	0 (0)	0 (0)
The level of performance has improved	18 (46)	13 (33)	4 (10)	4 (10)	0 (0)
The children concentrate adequately during activities	4 (10)	29 (74)	6 (15)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Again, these results indicate a very positive response from the coaches. It is interesting to

note that the perceptions of the coaches regarding the level of enjoyment of the children,

their understanding of the coaching they received, and to what extent the coaching has

improved performance, correspond very closely to the views of the children. The only

significant difference in response occurred regarding the number of sessions that the

children would like to attend. 79% of coaches felt that the children would welcome more

sessions, whereas only 58% of children said they would like more opportunities to attend.

Table 28 represents the opinions of the coaches regarding the educational courses they are

required to complete as part of the Active Sports initiative.

Table 28: Coach views on educational courses

The courses are:	Equity in coaching	Working with disabled sports people	First aid	Child protection
Too time consuming	9	0	0	0
Run often enough	9	12	8	9
Informative	15	21	19	19
Of appropriate difficulty	15	12	18	12
Well taught	22	20	19	22
Unnecessary	3	0	0	0

It is important to note that not all coaches responded to all questions as this depended on

which courses they had attended at the time they completed the questionnaire. However,

the majority of responses to the questions regarding training courses that the coaches had

attended were positive, with only a small number regarding them as unnecessary or too

time consuming.

Analysis of Coach Questionnaire Results

The data gathered from the administration of coach questionnaires will now be analysed around the same three dependent variables of sport, gender and area of residence as the participant questionnaires. The predictor or independent variables (Marshall, 1999) used will be centered around the responses of the coaches to two categories of questions. These are:

- The impact of the Active Sports programme

- The experience of the participants as perceived by the coaches

The Impact of the Active Sports Programme

The responses to a series of eight Likert Scale statements were scored in order to provide an average value for the answers of each coach. Each question had five possible responses and these were scored from 1-5 with 1 corresponding with the most negative answer. The opinions of the coaches regarding the impact of the Active Sports programme (independent variable) will now be considered by sport (dependent variable).

The Impact of the Active Sports Programme by Sport

In this section, each of the statements to which the coaches were required to give a response began with 'Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to'. The heading of each of the following figures completes the particular statement.

Figure 49 and each subsequent figure in this section indicates the views of the coaches with regard to the impact of Active Sports on the particular aspects of sports development and is categorised by the sport of the coach.

Figure 49: The development of sporting opportunities for children by sport
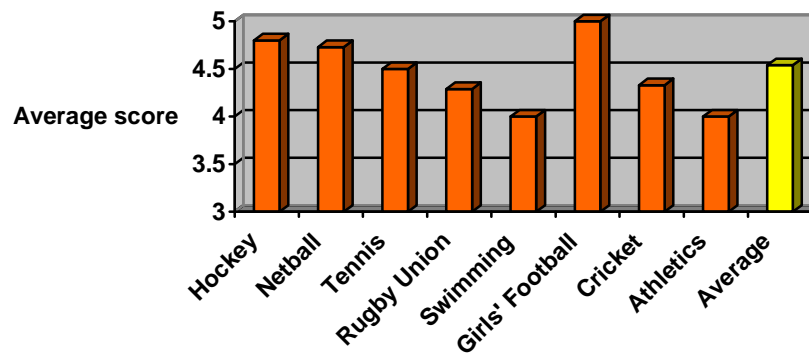
The opinions of the coaches about the contribution made by Active Sports to the development of sporting opportunities for children proved to be very positive. The maximum score was 5, indicating a response of 'strongly agree' and the average response of the coaches was 4.54. The coaches of girls' football recorded the maximum score of 5 with hockey (4.80) and netball (4.73) coaches also being particularly positive in this regard. However, those coaches responsible for the delivery of sessions in athletics (4.0), swimming (4.0) and rugby union (4.29) expressed less confidence in the impact of the initiative on increasing sporting opportunities.

Figure 50: The development of sporting talent by sport
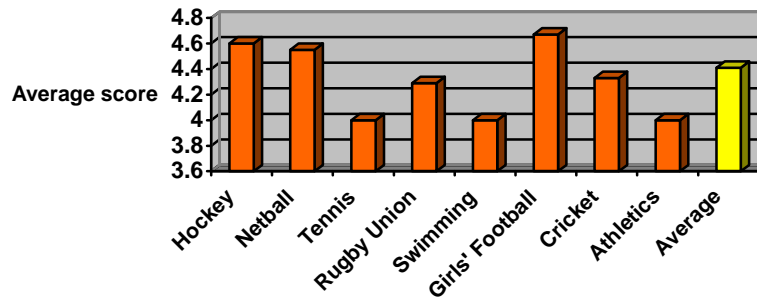
The views of the coaches on the impact of Active Sports on the development of sporting talent are presented by sport in figure 50 and again show a positive opinion in this regard. The average score was 4.41 out of a possible 5 and girls' football (4.67), hockey (4.60) and netball (4.55) coaches envisaged the greatest positive impact on sporting talent. Coaches of tennis (4.0), swimming (4.0) and athletics (4.0) were less sure that the initiative would make such a positive contribution to the development of sporting talent. It is interesting to note here that the responses of coaches of female dominated sports were the most positive.

Figure 51: Sports Equity
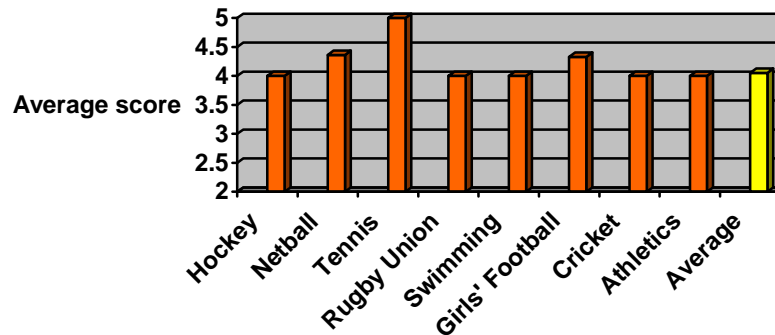
The coaches were slightly less confident that Active Sports would make a valuable contribution to sports equity than to the preceding statements, however an average overall assessment of 4.05 still indicates a response of 'agree' and as such remains positive. Tennis (5.0), netball (4.36) and girls' football (4.33) recorded the highest scores, again showing the enthusiasm of the coaches of female sports for the impact of the initiative.

Figure 52: Total physical activity by sport
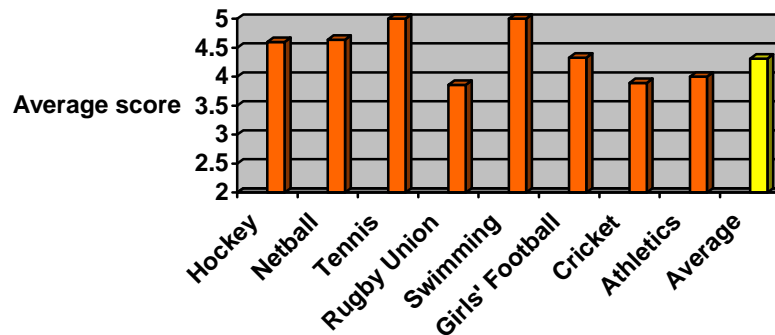
The coaches were asked to respond to the statement 'Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to the total amount of physical activity in which children in the scheme take part'. In this case, coaches of swimming (5.0), tennis (5.0), netball (4.64) and hockey (4.6) gave the highest value to the contribution of Active Sports. Rugby union (3.86) and cricket (3.89) coaches reported a less positive opinion of the impact of the initiative, with ratings that fell below the score of 4 which indicated agreement with the statement.

Figure 53: Talent identification by sport
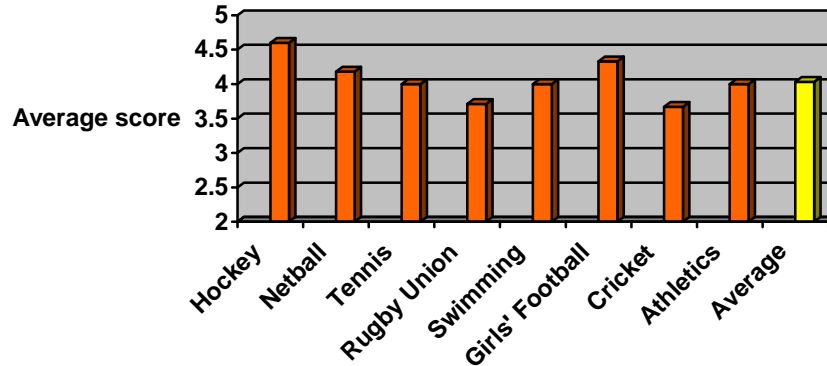
The opinions of Active Sports coaches about the impact of the initiative on talent

identification again showed a generally positive consensus with the average overall score

being 4.03. As with the responses to the development of sporting talent statement, hockey

(4.60), girls' football (4.33) and netball (4.18) coaches provided the most positive

feedback. Cricket (3.67) and rugby union (3.71) coaches, however, expressed less

confidence in the contribution of the initiative.

Figure 54: Coach development
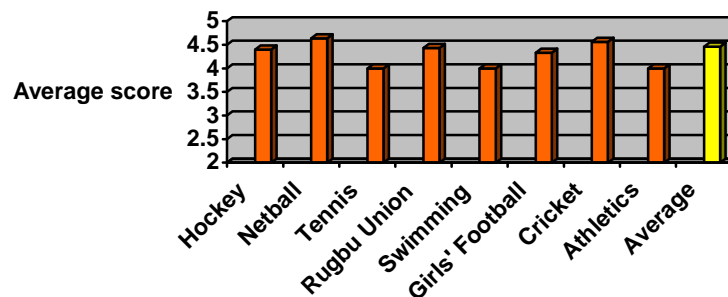
A requirement of Active Sports was that coaches attended a suite of educational courses designed to develop their experience and knowledge. In response to the statement 'Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to coach development', the coaches provided a very positive reaction with the average score being 4.46 out of a possible 5. Coaches from netball (4.64), cricket (4.56) and rugby union (4.43) provided the strongest affirmation of the contribution of the initiative to their personal development. Indeed, the average score of each group of coaches was 4 or above, indicating overall agreement with the statement.

Figure 55: Club development by sport
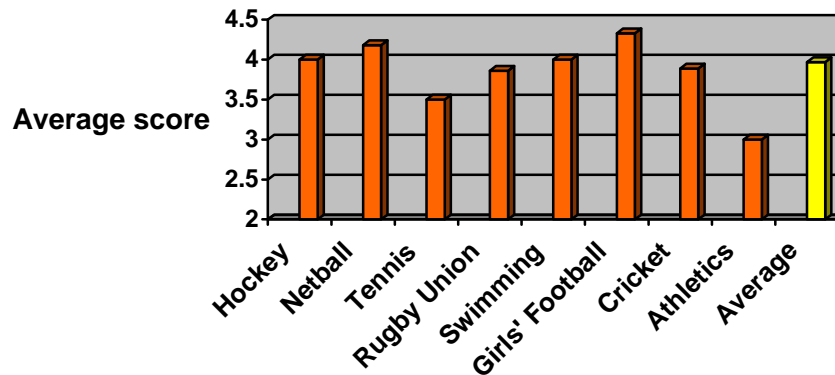
The impact of Active Sports on club development was assessed by the coaches less positively than on the other subject areas previously discussed. The average score by sport was 3.97 which for the first time falls below the score of 4 which indicates agreement with the statement that 'Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to club development'. Girls' football (4.33) and netball (4.18) gave the most positive responses with athletics (3.0) and tennis (3.50) being the most negative in this regard.

Figure 56: Number of potential world class athletes by sport
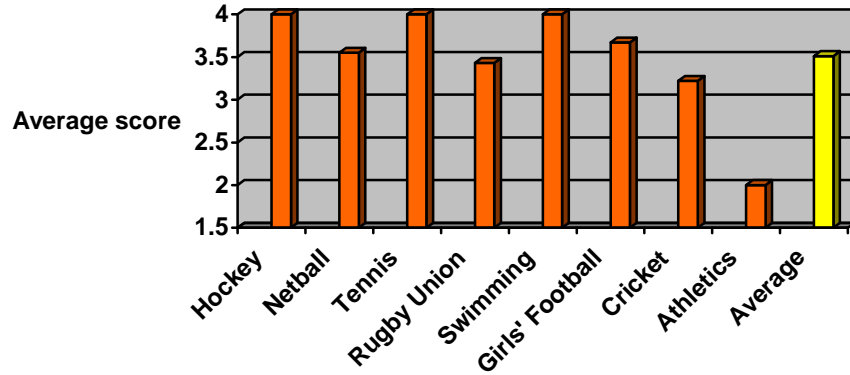
Of all the statements addressing the impact of the initiative, 'Active Sports will eventually increase the number of potential world class athletes in this country' provoked the most negative response from the coaches. The overall average score of 3.51 indicated a response of between 'unsure' scoring 3 and 'agree' scoring 4. Athletics (2.0), cricket (3.22) and rugby union (3.43) coaches provided the most negative responses with only coaches from swimming (4.0), tennis (4.0) and hockey (4.0) agreeing with the statement.

Figure 57: The overall impact of Active Sports by sport
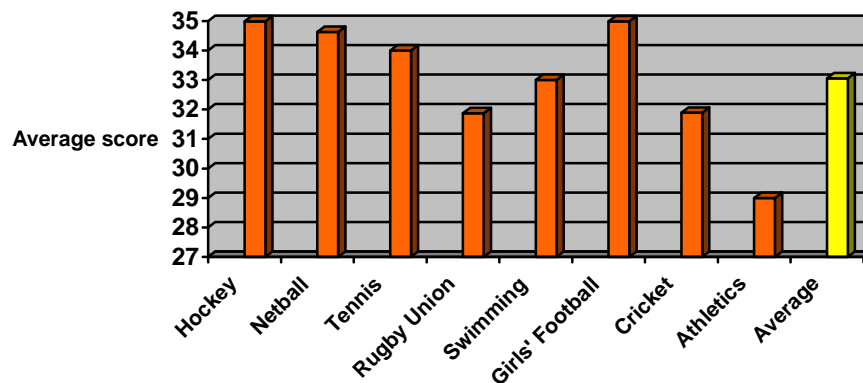
The overall opinion of the coaches regarding the impact of Active Sports was calculated by combining the scores for the responses to the eight 'impact' statements, the maximum attainable score being 40. The average overall rating was a very positive 33.06 with coaches of hockey (35.0), girls' football (34.99) and netball (34.63) rating the impact of the initiative particularly highly. The least positive opinions of the ability of Active Sports to make a valuable contribution to the development of children's sport were expressed by the coaches of athletics (29.0), rugby union (31.87) and cricket (31.89). However' it should be noted at this point that only one athletics coach completed the questionnaire and this result may not therefore be indicative of the views of all athletics coaches engaged in the scheme.

The opinions of the coaches regarding the impact of the Active Sports programme (independent variable) will now be considered by gender (dependent variable).

Figure 58: The impact of Active Sports by coach gender
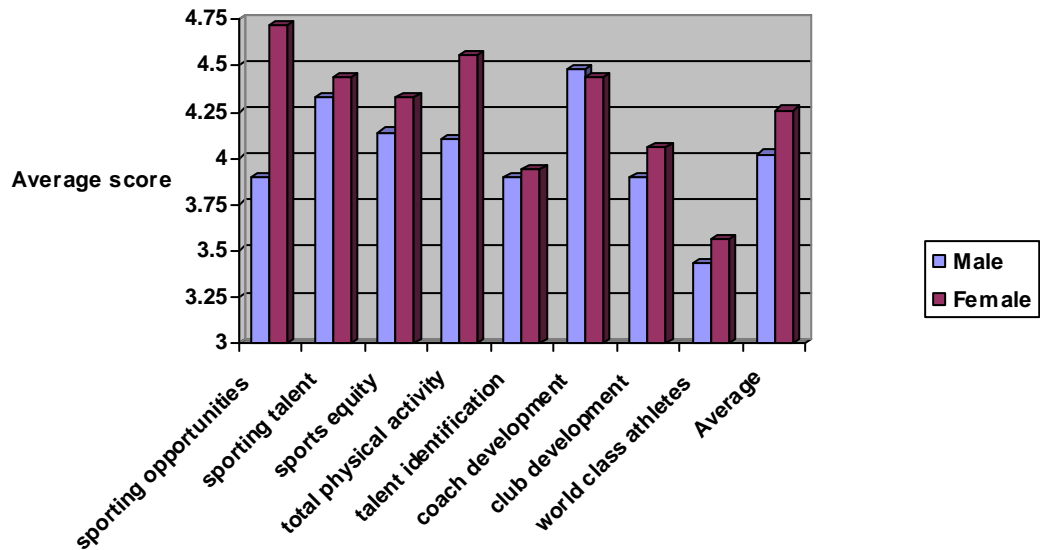
In the previous section, the views of coaches delivering female dominated sports featured prominently among the most positive results regarding the impact of Active Sports. As the majority of coaches in these sports are of the same gender as the participants, it is not surprising that female coaches have a higher opinion of the impact of the initiative. As Figure 58 indicates, female coaches responded more favourably than males to all but one of the 'impact' statements and gave the scheme an overall average score of 4.26 out of 5 compared to a score of 4.02 from males.

The opinions of the coaches regarding the impact of the Active Sports programme (independent variable) will now be considered by area of residence (dependent variable).

Figure 59: The impact of Active Sports by coach area of residence
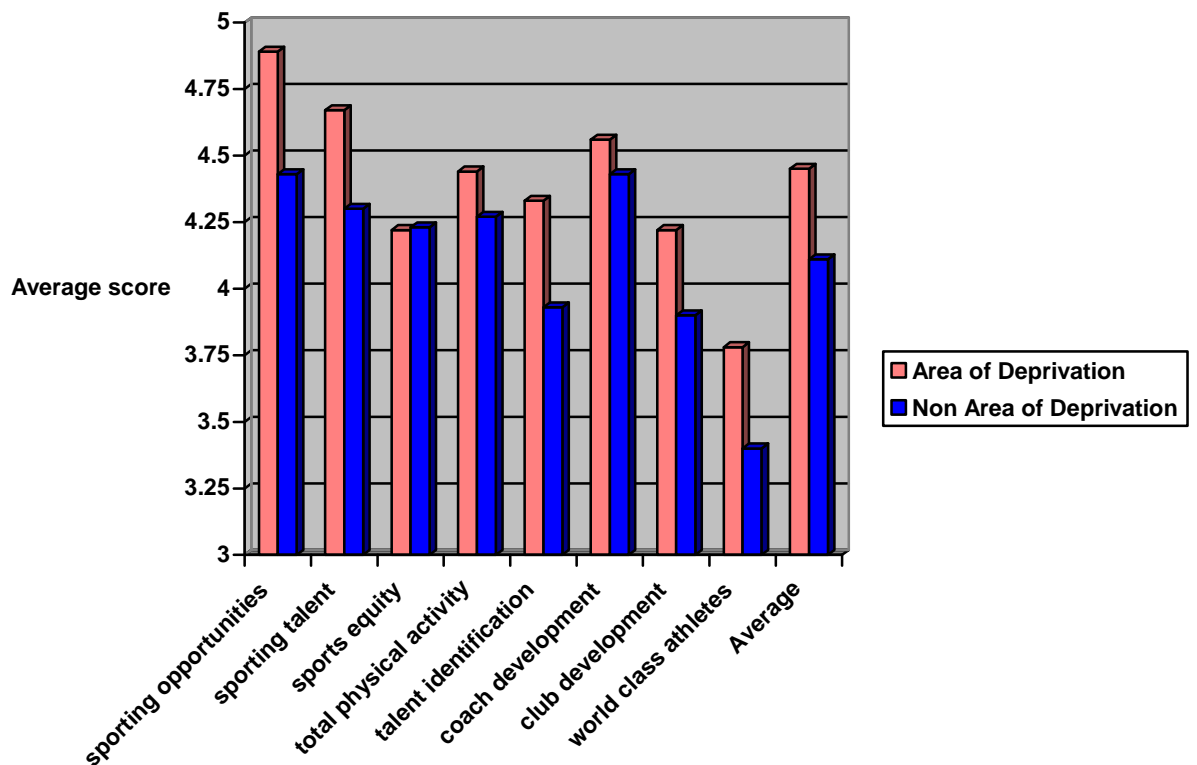
Figure 59 shows a comparison between the responses of coaches living in an area of deprivation and those from non deprived areas to the eight 'impact' statements contained in the questionnaire. Coaches residing in an area of deprivation indicated a more positive opinion of the impact of the initiative in all but one case, the exception being the contribution of Active Sports to sports equity. On average, these coaches rated the impact of the scheme as 4.45 out of 5 whereas the coaches from non priority areas rated the impact as 4.11.

The Active Sport Experience of the Participants as Perceived by the Coaches

In this section of the questionnaire, the coaches were requested to respond to a series of five Likert Scale statements which were scored in order to provide an average value for the answers of each coach. Each question had five possible responses and these were scored from 1-5 with 1 corresponding with the most negative answer. The opinions of the coaches regarding the Active Sports experience of the participants (independent variable) will now be considered by sport (dependent variable).

Figure 60: Coaches perception of the enjoyment of participants by sport
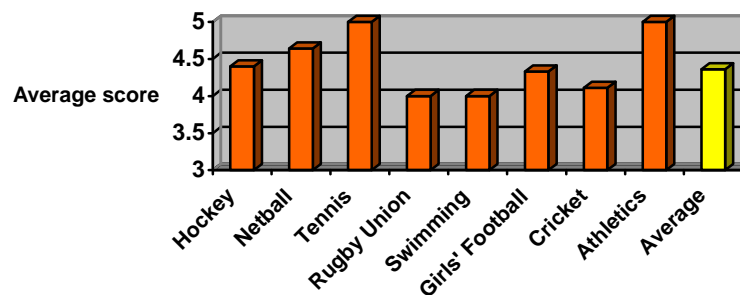
The coaches were asked to respond to the statement 'The children find Active Sports activities an enjoyable, fun experience'. On average, the coaches of all sports reported that this was the case at least most of the time which corresponds to a score of 4 or above. The overall average rating was 4.33, with athletics (5.0) and tennis (5.0) coaches expressing the opinion that the statement was true 'all of the time'. When comparing these results to the opinions of the participants (see figure 13), the average overall score of 4.43 exceeds the perception of the coaches. However, none of the participant sports reported a maximum score of 5.

Figure 61: Coaches perception of participant desire to take part in more activities by sport
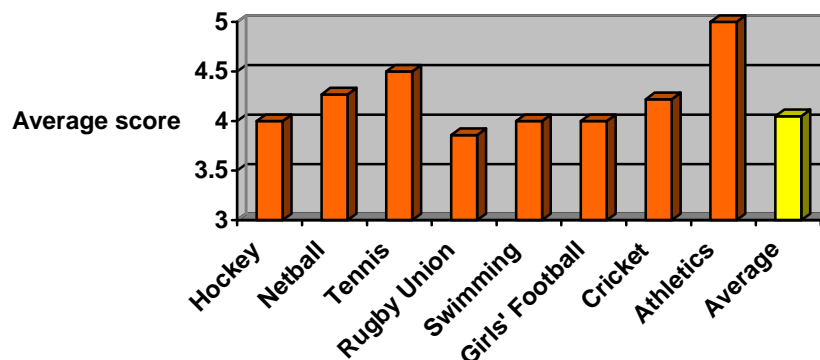
Figure 61 indicates the response of the coaches to the statement 'the children would take part in more activities in my sport if they were available'. The results show that athletics coaches strongly agreed (5.0) and all of the sports with the exception of rugby union at least agreed (4.0) with the statement. The participants themselves expressed the greatest willingness to take part in extra sessions in hockey, netball and cricket (Figure 46).

Figure 62: Coaches perception of participant understanding of activities by sport
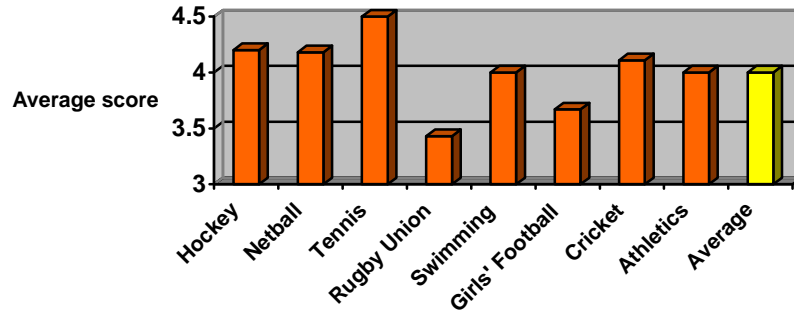
The coaches gave an overall average score of 4 when asked for their opinion on the statement 'During the activities the children appear to understand what is required of them'. This score equates to a response of 'agree' and all sports, with the exception of rugby union (3.43) and girls' football (3.67)' attained this rating. Interestingly, the participants rated their understanding overall as 4.22 (Figure 17), which was higher than that of the coaches, and rugby union players reported the lowest level of understanding (3.76).

Figure 63: Coaches perception of participant performance by sport
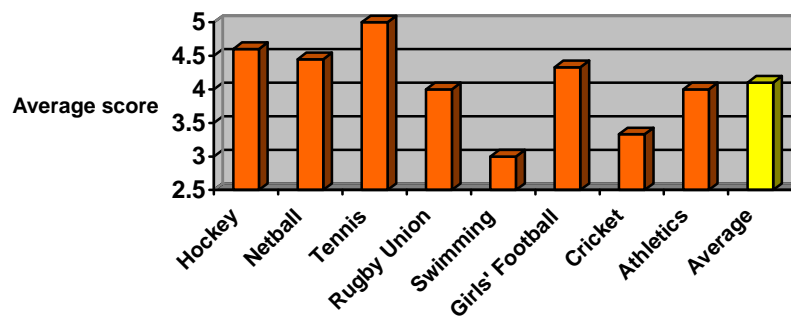
Coaches of all sports reported an overall improvement in the children's performance with a score of 5 indicating a response of 'a great deal', 'quite a lot' scoring 4 and 'moderately' scoring 3. Tennis (5.0), hockey (4.6) and netball (4.45) coaches indicated the greatest improvement in performance whilst cricket (3.33) and swimming (3.0) coaches reported less improvement. However, when these results are compared to the opinions of the participants regarding their skill improvement (Figure19), there are considerable differences. For example, participants in cricket (4.44) and swimming (4.39) rated their improvement much higher than the coaches.

Figure 64: Coaches perception of participant concentration by sport
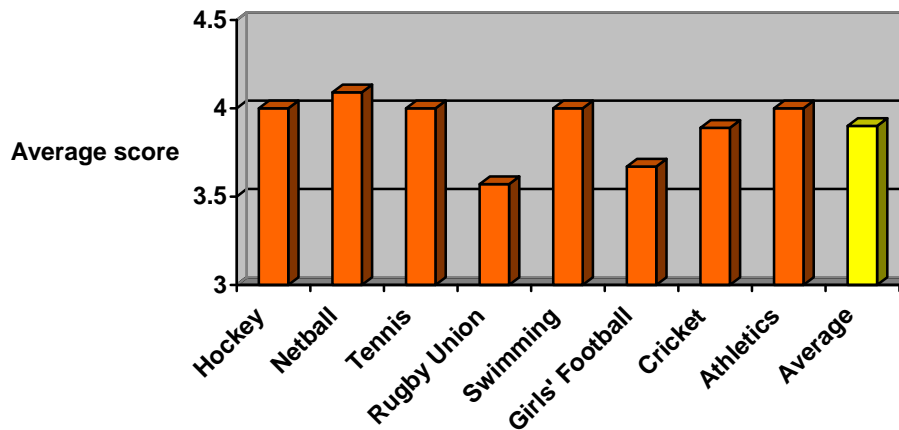
The coaches were requested to provide a response to the statement 'the children concentrate adequately during the activities' from a choice ranging from 'all of the time' scoring 5 to 'never' scoring 1. The average overall rating was 3.9, corresponding to a response of between 'some of the time' scoring 3 and 'most of the time' scoring 4. Netball coaches regarded the concentration of their participants as highest (4.09) and rugby union

coaches the lowest (3.57).The participants provided responses to a statement regarding their level of boredom during activities (Figure 20) and, when the opinions of the coaches are compared with this, it reveals that the overall participant rating was 4.27, which indicates a higher level of concentration than that observed by the coaches. Also, rugby union participants reported the highest level of boredom which coincides with the coaches' views of their level of concentration.

The overall Active Sports experience of the participants as perceived by the coaches will now be presented by sport.

Figure 65: The overall Active Sports experience of the coaches by sport
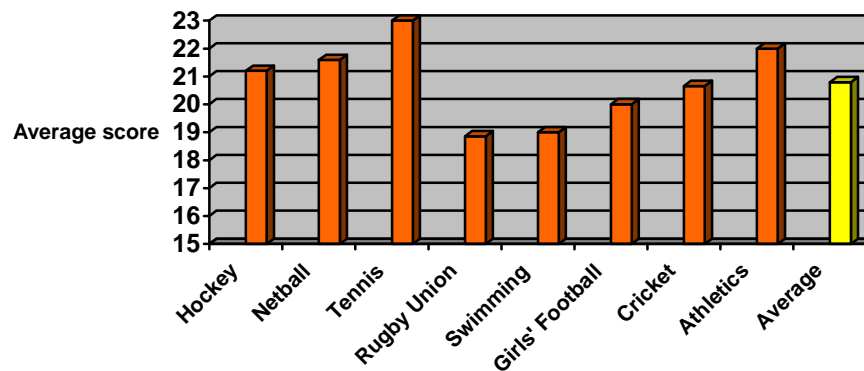
The overall opinion of the coaches regarding the Active Sports experience of the participants was calculated by combining the scores for the responses to the five 'experience' statements, the maximum attainable score being 25. The average overall rating was a 20.79 with coaches of tennis (23.0), athletics (22.0) and netball (21.59) rating the experience of the children particularly positively. In contrast, the least positive ratings of

the Active Sports experience of the children were expressed by the coaches of rugby union (18.86) swimming (19.0) and girls' football (20.0). However, it should be noted at this point that only one athletics coach and one swimming coach completed the questionnaire and this result may not therefore be indicative of the views of all coaches engaged in these sports.

These results cannot be directly compared with the views of the participants (Figure 23) in terms of overall score as the number of statements requiring a response differ. However, comparison can be made by ranked order of the scores. In this respect, athletics and netball were ranked in the top 3 by both coaches and participants for the quality of the Active Sports experience. At the other end of the spectrum, rugby union was positioned 9th out of 10 by participants and 8th out of 8 by coaches. The largest disparity between the opinions of the coaches and participants occurred in tennis which was placed 1st by coaches and 8th by the participants.

The Active Sports Experience of the Participants by Coach Gender

The opinions of the coaches regarding the Active Sports experience of the participants (independent variable) will now be considered by coach gender (dependent variable).

Figure 66: The Active Sports experience of the participants by coach gender
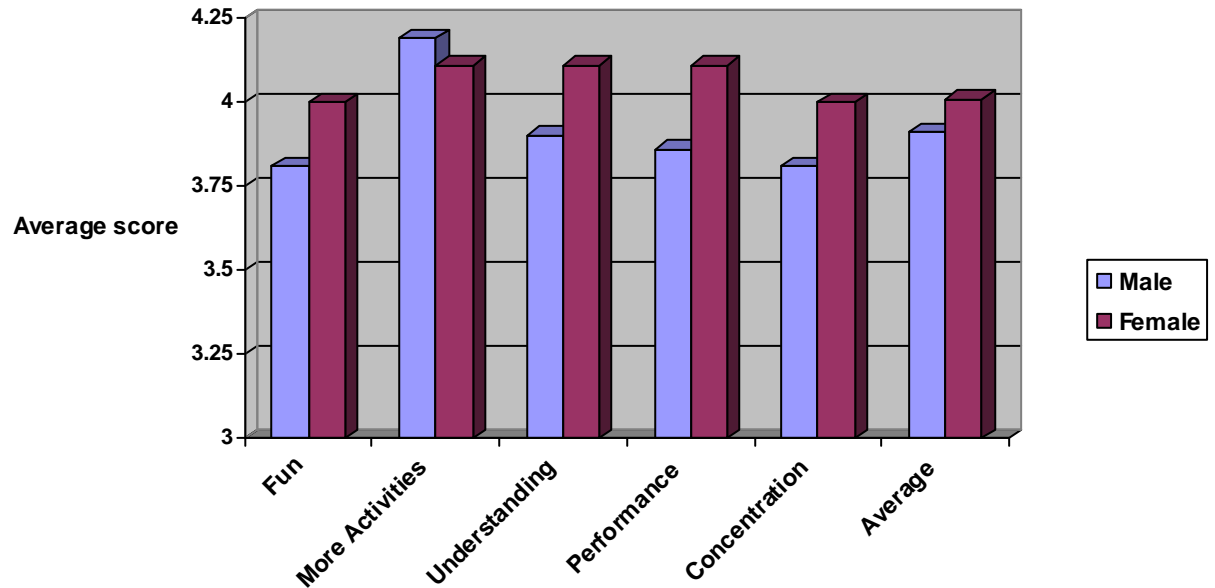
Figure 66 graphically represents the opinions of the coaches regarding the quality of the

participants Active Sports experience and is categorised by coach gender. In all but one

case, female responses to the five 'experience' statements were more positive than those of

male coaches. Overall, females rated the quality of the experience as 4.01 compared with

an average male rating of 3.91

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The opinions of the coaches regarding the Active Sports experience of the participants

(independent variable) will now be considered by the area of residence of the coaches

(dependent variable).

Figure 67: The Active Sports experience of the participants by coach area of residence
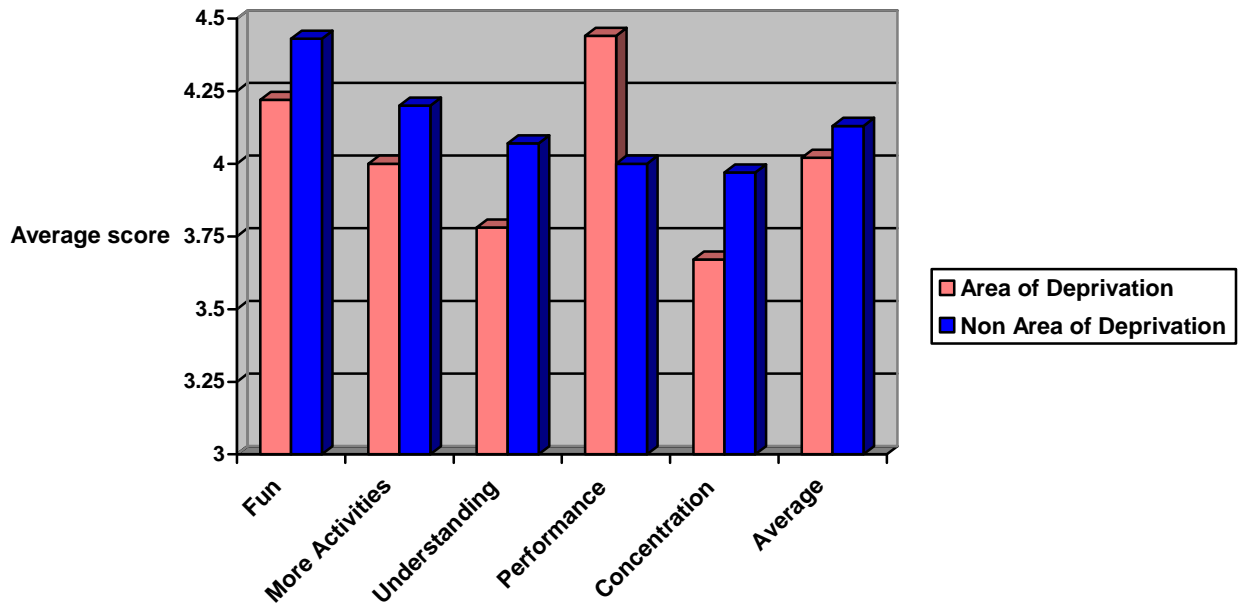
Figure 67 shows a comparison between the responses of coaches living in an area of deprivation and those from non deprived areas to the five 'experience' statements contained in the questionnaire. In contrast to the results regarding the impact of the initiative, coaches residing in an area of deprivation indicated a more negative opinion of the Active Sports experience of the participants. The responses to the statements indicate that in all but one instance, coaches from a non deprived area regarded the quality of the experience of the participants to be better than their counterparts. The exception was the response to the statement 'the level of the performance of the participating children has improved'. On average, these coaches rated the experience of the children as 4.13 out of 5 whereas the coaches from priority areas rated the impact as 4.02.

The next section of this chapter will consider the results of the interviews carried out with both participants and coaches engaged in the Active Sports initiative.

Participant Interview Sample

A total of 83 interviews were carried out with participants, which represents a sample of 1.4% of the overall population of the scheme. Table 29 shows the distribution of the sample in terms of sport and gender.

Table 29: Participant interview sample by sport and gender (percentage of sample in parenthesis)

	Hockey	Tennis	Rugby Union	Netball	Athletics	Cricket	Girls' Football	Total
Male	7	6	8	0	7	7	0	**35 (42%)**
Female	6	7	5	11	5	4	10	**48 (58%)**
Total	**13**	**13**	**13**	**11**	**12**	**11**	**10**	**83**

The sample does not include participants from basketball, swimming and rugby league as these sports were added to the initiative in the Durham Sport region after the player interviews process were completed. However, the participants chosen from the seven remaining sports are representative both of the individual sport and the whole population of the initiative in terms of gender, with a 42% to 58% male to female ratio compared to a 47% to 53% male to female ratio in the initiative as a whole.

The age distribution of the sample was also taken into consideration when selecting participants for interview, with an emphasis placed upon children within the 10- 14 year age range (100% of interviews). This was done in order to represent the age range that the majority of the overall initiative population occupy and also to facilitate standardisation of questions by eliminating the nine years and under category of children who may have experienced problems understanding the questions. The participants interviewed were also selected on the basis of area of residence. As Table 30 shows, 45% of the sample lived in an area of deprivation compared with 44% of the whole population of the study.

Table 30: Participant interview sample by sport and area of residence (percentage of sample in parenthesis)

	Hockey	Tennis	Rugby Union	Netball	Athletics	Cricket	Girls' Football	Total
Living in an area of deprivation	5 (38%)	4 (31%)	7 (54%)	4 (36%)	5 (42%)	5 (45%)	7 (70%)	**37 (45%)**

The interviewees were again selected using the stratified random sampling technique based upon the variables within the study. The sample is therefore representative of the appropriate sub groups present within the overall participant population (Gratton, 2004).

Participant Interviews

In order to refine and develop both the interview questions and the interview technique of the investigator, pilot interviews were conducted with children aged between 10 and 14 years. Particular note was taken of any difficulties individuals experienced regarding the wording of the questions and modifications made to improve clarity of the interview

content. This process also served to reduce the possibility of the interviewer improving their technique through the live interview process and thus improving the reliability of the early interviews.

The participant interviews were of a structured nature with a mixture of open and closed questions designed to provide the information required to answer the section of the research question relating to the sporting involvement of the participants and the factors influencing that involvement.

A summary of the findings of the individual participant interviews follows. These results are split into groups, the contents of which required responses to questions in particular subject areas.

Sporting Knowledge and Preferences

- 69% of 83 participants named a favourite player in their active sport, however only 20% of 24 hockey and netball players were able to do so, suggesting a disparity in awareness of, or a lack of interest in certain sports included in the initiative

- When considered by gender, 34% of 35 males were unable to name a favourite player in their active sport compared with 29% of 48 females.

- The top 3 favourite players (all sports) of the 83 participants were David Beckham (14%), Johny Wilkinson (14%) and Alan Shearer (11%); the top female sportsperson was Paula Radcliffe (5%), although the timing of the interviews was clearly a factor. This suggests a preference for or greater awareness of male role models in sport

- 30% (n= 25) stated that their active sport was their favourite sport – 70% (n= 58) named a different sport and there was no disparity between the responses by gender. This indicates that the majority of participants would prefer to take part in different sports than they were being offered.

- Favourite sports were football (25%), swimming (13%), rugby (12%) netball (8%) rounders (6%) and skateboarding and hockey (both 5%) – again interviews shortly after the rugby world cup showed a marked increase in rugby union as a favourite sport.

- Of the sports not included in the initiative, male football (37% of males) was the most popular favourite sport followed by rounders, pool/snooker and roller blading/skateboarding.

Parental Influence

- 39% (n= 32) of participants had a parent who plays sport or has in the past – of these 66% (n= 21) were fathers and 34% (n= 11) mothers.

- The sport played by parents was the same as the child's favourite sport in 56% of cases, suggesting that parental preference in sport may influence the preference of the child.

- 48% (n= 40) stated that they had received encouragement to play sport from their parents – of these, 65% (n= 26) were male and 35% (n= 14) female indicating that males were much more likely to receive parental support.

- 70% (n= 22) of children with sporting parents said that they had received encouragement.

- 49% of children living in an area of deprivation reported receiving parental encouragement compared with 46 % of those living in a non-priority area.

- 32% (n= 27) took part in sport with parents, with very little reported overall gender difference (male 31%, female 33%). Of these, 56% took part with father, 22% with mother,

19% with both and 4% with grandparent indicating that male significant others were more likely to play sport with the children regardless of gender.

- All of the males who participated with parents reported this to be with the father/grandfather whereas females reported participating with mother (38%), father (31%) and both parents (31%). This indicates that the participation of girls in sport with parents was more likely to be a family activity and the participation of boys more likely to be an all male activity.

- Of those participating with parents and living in a disadvantaged area, 77% took part with father and 23% with both parents. None reported participating with mother alone. This compares with 36% with father, 43% with mother, 14% with both and 7% with grandparent of those living in non disadvantaged areas. This suggests that mothers in non disadvantaged areas are more involved in sport with their children

- Of those parents participating with children, 70% play or have played sport and 30% have not.

Sporting Involvement

- 86% (n= 71) reported playing sport in school with 60% of males and 50% of females having the opportunity to take part in their favourite sport. There was no overall gender difference in participation.

- 30% (n= 25) took part in after school sports clubs with males (31%) participating slightly more than females (29%). This however may be influenced by the nature of the sample, in that the children had chosen to take part in the Active Sports initiative which had set gender targets.

- 59% (n= 49) played sport with friends in free time, with most popular sports being football (43%), skateboarding (16%), rugby (12%) and swimming (8%). Of these, males were twice as likely (83%) to play sport with friends than females (42%).

- Children from areas of deprivation were much more likely (78%) to report playing sport with their friends in their free time than those from non deprived areas (46%).

- The reasons given for playing sport were:

  Male: fun (83%), to improve performance (57%), friends play (49%), winning (40%), to keep fit (26%), be professional (20%).

  Female: fun (85%), friends play (77%), to improve performance (42%), winning (23%) to keep fit (19%) be professional (2%).

- 23% of females and 17% of males also gave responses such as 'no choice' 'something to do' and 'made to at school'.

- On a scale of 1-10, fitness levels were rated overall as 7 for males and 6 for females, suggesting that males had a higher perception of their fitness levels than females.

- On a scale of 1-10, skill levels in their active sports were rated as 6.2 for males and 5.5 for females, showing that males regarded themselves as more competent.

Active Sport Knowledge

- 65% (n= 52) of those interviewed had no idea what the Active Sports initiative was.

- Of the rest, responses included coaching course, after school club, part of PE, sports development and government initiative.

- 55% (n= 46) became aware of Active Sports through their school, 16% (n= 13) through a club, 2% (n= 2) from parents and 27% (n= 22) did not know.

- 13% (n= 11) reported that they had friends who did not take part in Active Sports even though they would like to. The reasons given were lack of transport, type of sport offered, not selected, money and other commitments.

- 34% (n= 28) made suggestions as to how they feel Active Sports sessions could be improved. Of these, 46 % would like more games/matches/competitions, 14% more sessions, 11% better facilities, 7% less talk and 7% less hard work.

The Meaning of Sport

- When asked what they think about when someone talks about sport the most popular responses were as shown in table 31.

Table 31: The meaning of sport

	Male %	Female %	Total %
Fun	40	47	49
Winning	60	29	42
Friendships	6	31	20
Competition	17	21	19
Television	17	13	14
Money	20	4	11
Coaching	14	8	11
Practice/training	20	4	11
Skill	14	6	10
Playing well	11	8	10

The major points that emerge from the table are that males associated winning, money, practice/training, and skill more than girls with sport, whereas girls associated friendships and fun more than boys. Nevertheless, fun, winning and friendships were the top answers when the participants were asked to consider the meaning of sport.

Having considered the data from the participants' interview, the results of the interviews

conducted with the coaches will be presented.

Coach Interview Sample

A total of 10 interviews were conducted with Active Sports coaches which represents a

sample of 4% of the overall population of the scheme. The sample was selected using the

stratified random sampling method, with sport and gender used as the sub-groups for

consideration. Table 32 indicates the distribution of coaches in terms of sport and gender.

Table 32: Coach interview sample by sport and gender (percentage of sample in

parenthesis)

	Hockey	Tennis	Rugby Union	Netball	Athletics	Cricket	Girls' Football	Total
Male	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	6 (60%)
Female	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	4 (40%)
Total	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	10

The sample of coaches interviewed were 60% (n= 6) male and 40% (n= 4) female. This

compares with 56% male and 44% female for the whole population of Active Sports

coaches who delivered activities. Basketball, rugby league and swimming are not

represented due to the lack of available coaches for interview.

Coach Interviews

These interviews were of a structured nature with a mixture of open and closed question designed to investigate the knowledge and opinions of the coaches regarding the Active Sports initiative. These results will be used to address the part of the research question concerned with the impact and suitability for purpose of the initiative (Table 7). (Sample of 10)

- Q1 – What is Active Sports?

All of the coaches were aware that Active Sports is a national sports development programme. However, there was considerable confusion regarding the length of the scheme, the sports involved and the source of funding. Also, only 20% (n= 2) coaches were able to describe how Active Sports fits in with the other 'Active' programmes and 60% (n= 6) thought that the main aim of the scheme is to introduce children to new sports. This shows a lack of understanding of the aims of the initiative and brings into question the reliability of the coaches responses regarding the suitability for purpose of Active Sports.

- Q2 – Why did you become an Active Sports coach?

The most frequently cited responses to this question involved:

Enjoyment 70% (n= 7), putting something back into the sport 50% (n= 5), personal development 50% (n= 5) and extra income 40% (n= 4). Although the honesty of the responses is not being questioned here, these responses could well have resulted from a desire to provide the 'correct' answers

- Q3 – Do you feel that you have improved as a coach as a result of Active Sports involvement and if so, in what way?

60% (n= 6) of the coaches interviewed answered 'yes' to this question with the most common reasons being qualifications gained (50%, n= 5), experience gained (50%, n= 5), better organised (30%, n= 3) and more confident (20%, n=2).

- Q4 – Do you coach more because of Active Sports involvement?

50% (n=5) of coaches answered 'yes' to this question. However, 30 % (n=3) reported that Active Sports coaching had replaced other unpaid coaching activities.

- Q5 – Does the requirement to attend educational courses help or hinder?

Although all coaches felt that the opportunity to gain relevant qualifications was important, 40% (n= 4) said that the courses should be voluntary.

- Q6 – What strategies do you use to meet Active Sports equity targets?

None of the coaches reported that they had specific strategies to meet targets – rather, they simply coached the children that attended the sessions.

- Q7 – Do you think that equity targets help or hinder the initiative?

There was some confusion about what exactly the equity targets were, although the majority of coaches (70%, n= 7) felt that the initiative should be about improving performance and not meeting equity targets.

- Q8 – How do you rate the support you receive from Durham Sport?

All of the coaches reported that the support they receive from the activators was good, as was the provision of educational support. Some of the coaches (20%, n= 2) did say that they felt there was too much paperwork to do.

- Q9 - On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate the physical fitness of the participants?

The average rating was 5. There was some concern expressed regarding the fitness and in particular the body composition of some of the children.

- Q10 - Why do you think the children participate?

The responses to this question were similar to that of the children i.e. fun, improve performance, friends play. None of the coaches mentioned keeping fit, although this was important to 26% of the participants.

- Q11 - Have you identified any potential world class performers?

None of the coaches felt that the children they coached had this potential, although 50% (n= 5) felt that as the majority of their coaching had taken place at stage 1, it was too early to tell. This contrasts with the views expressed by the coaches in the questionnaires regarding the potential contribution of the initiative to the development of sporting talent.

- Q12 - What suggestions do you have to improve the initiative?

Most of the coaches did not have any suggestions however some did suggest that if the initiative was designed to produce world class athletes, there was too much emphasis on participation and not enough on excellence.

Having collected and presented the data, the thesis will continue with a detailed discussion of these results with particular reference to the research question that the study is attempting to address.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Discussion

In this chapter, the main findings of the research will be discussed and interpreted with reference to previous literature and the research question that the study attempts to address. The discussion will initially follow the chronological sequence of the data collection, i.e. registration forms then questionnaires and finally interviews and comment on the suitability for purpose of the selected measurement tools and the contribution each tool made to answering the research question. This information will then be discussed in detail and related to the aims and objectives of Active Sports, including consideration of the appropriateness of the design of the initiative. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the performance of the Durham Sport Partnership in delivering the Active Sports programme.

The study began with the collection of quantitative data using registration forms (appendix D), a process that continued throughout the data collection period. These forms proved to be invaluable in obtaining vital information regarding the profile of the participant and coach population engaged in the initiative. These profiles included the necessary information to monitor and evaluate the actual performance of Active Sports in the Durham Sport region against the targets, aims and objectives established by Sport England. This would allow the study to address the section of the research question which examined 'to what extent Active Sports achieved its equity targets in the Durham Sport region?'

The equity targets included in the design of Active Sports required the initiative to include specific percentages of participants and coaches in the priority groups of gender, area of residence, disability and ethnicity. The inclusion of these targets, however, brings into question the focus of the initiative in that it suggests an emphasis on participation rather than excellence. The gender targets will now be discussed in more detail.

Each individual sport was allocated a gender target for children (Table 9) with the exceptions of netball and girls' football which were exclusively aimed at female participants. Netball was the only sport in which there was not a gender target for coaches.

The registration form data revealed that overall, 47% (n= 2814) of participants were male and 53% (n= 3198) female. This would suggest that the initiative had been successful in targeting females as a priority group and that Active Sports in the Durham Sport region had achieved the national target of 50% female participation. However, netball and girls' football were female only sports and accounted for 1346 competitors, thus giving a considerable boost to the female proportion of participants. Furthermore, closer inspection of the registration form data highlighted the male dominated sports of rugby union, basketball and rugby league as the least successful in achieving their gender targets. The lack of female representation in these sports supports the view that females continue to be excluded as a consequence of the development of modern sports in line with the assumptions, values and ideologies of males, maleness and masculinity (Dunning, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Kidd, 1987; Maguire, 1986; Messner, 1990). This apparent exclusion is

however only a reality if the female participants express a wish to take part in male dominated sports and do not exclude themselves through lack of interest.

The appropriateness of including these participant gender targets in the Active Sports initiative is open to question. Active Sports was aimed at children who already participated in sport and wished to extend that engagement outside the school setting. However, as the early experiences of sport and physical activity often occur within school (Kirk, 2004), the desire to further participate is a result of the quality of that experience. This suggests that the gender take up of Active Sports activities is more reliant on initiatives such as Active Schools and that the inclusion of gender targets in such schemes should be the priority. School based initiatives concentrate on the foundation stage of the sports development continuum and can provide a significant contribution to the physical literacy and sporting attitudes of young children (Whitehead, 2005). In a survey carried out by Mori (2003), 52% of primary age boys reported taking part in sports clubs outside school compared with 32% of girls. This further suggests that school provision is the place to impose gender targets to enable out of school initiatives to recruit equitably.

The completion of registration forms was also used to collect information in order to formulate the gender profile of the Active Sports coaches. The results show (Table 12) that 56% of coaches were male and 44% female, although again this is misleading in that these figures include 63 netball coaches which as a sport was not subject to a gender target. When adjusted to disregard this sport, the spread of coaches becomes 77% male and 23% female. In either case, these overall figures compare favourably with the target set by Sport

England of 25% female coaches to be engaged in the initiative (Sport England 1999a). The sports in which female coaches were under represented were both rugby codes and girls' football.

Although the proportion of female coaches in Britain has increased in the last decade (Townend, 2007), research commissioned by Sports Coach UK reveals that at the time of the completion of the Active Sports initiative, 75% of all coaches were male and 25% female. In addition, of these coaches, 41% of male and 30% of female coaches were qualified (Mori, 2004). This shows that the overall targets set by Sport England are now being met at a national level, vindicating the decision to include these gender targets in initiatives such as Active Sports.

Quantitative data collected via registration forms regarding the area of residence of participants and coaches will now be considered in more detail.

When the post codes of the participants were analysed against a list of areas of deprivation agreed with Sport England, 44% of children were classified as living in such areas in comparison to a Durham Sport Partnership target of 56%. Although time consuming, this method of data collection proved to be convenient and reliable as the process involved checking post codes using the Neighbourhood Statistics section of the Government maintained National Statistics website (www.nationalstatistics.gov.uk/neighbouhoodstatistics). This check revealed the electoral

ward to which the post code applied and this was then verified for status against the agreed areas of deprivation.

Only rugby league (66%) exceeded the Durham Sport target of 56% for the inclusion of children from areas of deprivation; however, this result must be viewed with some caution. All of the rugby league activities took place in the district of Easington and as the whole of this area is designated as an area of deprivation, it is unsurprising that the results were so positive. The decision to hold all of the activities in Easington was a conscious one and as such calls into question the wisdom of including area of residence equity targets in Active Sports. In effect, this decision excluded children who did not reside in a priority area from participating in rugby league and as such manipulated the inclusion figures in favour of those living in an area of deprivation. The influence of the Partnership Games also served to improve the overall percentage of children from a priority area, giving a false impression of the success of the initiative. Of the sports which failed to achieve the area of deprivation target, hockey (35%), tennis (35%) and swimming (30%) included the lowest proportion of participants. In the case of hockey and tennis, the location of the facilities used to deliver Active Sports may have influenced the results as none of the clubs in which the hockey and tennis sessions took place were in an area of deprivation. However, this was not the case in swimming and it may be that these sports simply did not target children from areas of deprivation. It is interesting to note at this point that a survey carried out by the UK Sports Council (1997) revealed that 69% of swimmers and 54% of hockey players in elite squads were from the AB social group. This group is made up of professionals/managers and only 19% of the population were categorised as belonging to this social class. This suggests that

these two sports are traditionally the preserve of people from less than deprived areas, a factor which could have influenced the inclusion of children from areas of deprivation. The survey by the UK Sports Council further suggests that the first step to sporting excellence is to be born into a middle class family.

The area of residence profile of the Active Sports coaches proved to be very similar to that of the participants. Overall, 23% of coaches reported living in an area of deprivation against a Partnership target of 40%. Rugby league again recruited the highest proportion of coaches from deprived areas (50%) and swimming (20%), hockey (14%) and tennis (8%) the lowest. These results indicate a link between the social status of coaches and participants in these sports. Overall, Active Sports from areas of deprivation were under represented in the initiative which is a situation that exists nationally with Mori (2004) reporting 70% of coaches from social group A, B, and C1 and 30% from groups D and E. Coaches from less affluent sections of society have also been identified as socially excluded from coaching (Kay et al., 2008). However, this report also acknowledges the continued need to recruit and train more coaches in the UK which brings into question the appropriateness of including area of deprivation targets for coaches. If the number of coaches are to be significantly increased, does it matter from which social group they emerge? The area of deprivation target will not necessarily increase the overall numbers of coaches from this social group however, reasonable payment for coaching services could. Active Sports coaches were paid and the question of whether this influenced their motivation for engagement in the initiative will be discussed later.

Attention will now be given to the inclusion of disability targets in the Active Sports

programme. The number disabled participants (Table 10) were reported to constitute 3.2%

of the overall participants in the scheme against a Partnership target of 2%. This would

appear at first glance to signify a triumph by Active Sports in the social inclusion of

disabled children. However, on closer inspection, the impact of the Partnership Games on

these statistics cannot be ignored. Of the 190 disabled children registered to participate in

Active Sports activities, 125 were only registered through the Partnership Games.

Consequently, if these participants are disregarded, the overall figure for disability

inclusion is reduced to 1%. It would seem reasonable not to include these registrations as

the 'one off' nature of the Partnership Games does not constitute full engagement of these

children in the initiative.

The performance of the individual sports in meeting the Partnership target for disability

inclusion was mixed. Tennis (2%) and rugby union (2.5%) achieved the target, whereas

swimming and basketball failed to register any disabled children. All of the Active Sports

with the exception of rugby league are included in the English Federation of Disability

Sports list of priority sports (EFDS, 2001) which raises the question of whether some of

these sports are as individually committed to social inclusion as their umbrella

organisation.

The benefits of participation sport and physical activity to disabled people are well

documented (Coppernolle, 1996; Morisbak, 1995; Kristen, 2002). However, research has

questioned the ability of society to provide adequate opportunities for this participation,

particularly in a mainstream setting (DePauw, 1997; Taub, 2000). In addition, Finch et al. (2001) report that disabled children are much less likely to take part in extra curricular sport than young people in general. In view of these points and considering that Active Sports was essentially a mainstream, extra curricular initiative designed to contribute to the development of elite sport, the inclusion of participant disability targets seems less than appropriate. It can be seen from the structure of National Governing Bodies for sport which include sub divisions dealing specifically with the needs of disabled athletes that this development is viewed as essentially separate. It is therefore not in the interest of either mainstream or disability sport to hinder their development by the inclusion of unnecessary targets. Rather, the specific needs of athletes from both groups would be better served with separate initiatives, particularly when the intention is to improve the elite profile of the sport. The inclusion of modified sports in the Partnership Games indicated the commitment of Active Sports in the Durham Sport region to the inclusion of disabled children at a participation level. However, this commitment was perhaps quite rightly not mirrored in the recruitment of disabled children to the more performance orientated mainstream activities.

The commitment of Active Sports to include disabled coaches in the scheme (Table 13) is again questionable. However, given the pattern of inclusion of disabled athletes, this is not surprising. Overall, only four disabled coaches (1.8%) engaged with the initiative against an overall target of 2%.

Targets for the inclusion of participants from ethnic minorities will now be discussed.

Despite the assertion of Spracken et al. (2006) that there has been limited success in achieving racial equality in sport, the results for the inclusion of children from BEM communities (Table 11) were encouraging. Overall 1.7% of participants originated from ethnic populations against a Partnership target of 1% and all sport with the exceptions of basketball and rugby league exceeded this target. However, in light of the findings of Rowe and Champion (2000) which highlighted large participation disparities between different ethnic groups, the method of measurement used to establish the ethnic minority profile of participants is open to question. The respondents to the registration forms were asked to indicate their ethnic origin from a list of choices and this would have enabled analysis of the results by ethnic group. However, the information was only stored on the Durham Sport database as whether or not they were from an ethnic minority, thus negating the opportunity to carry out this analysis. As the ethnic population of the Durham Sport region is mainly in small pockets of essentially the same ethnic groups, the overall participation rates could have been influenced by which ethnic groups exist within the region. For example, if the participants in the initiative from an ethnic minority had emerged from the 'Black Other' group identified by Rowe and Champion (2000) as taking part in sport far more than the national average then the success of the initiative in exceeding the ethnic minority equity target would be understandable.

Nevertheless, the question remains as to the appropriateness of the inclusion of ethnicity targets. In this case, it would be reasonable to assume that the ethnic profile of the Active Sports participants should mirror that of the overall population. However, imposing the requirement to include a particular proportion of children from ethnic minorities may serve to exclude those from non ethnic origin. The interest of the children and their ability to

perform should be the only criteria by which they were either chosen or decided to participate.

The Durham Sport target for inclusion of coaches from a Black or ethnic minority background was set at 1%. However, the initiative failed to recruit any coaches from these groups. This may be because there is a lack of qualified coaches or a reluctance to integrate into an initiative in which ethnic groups were very much in the minority. In either case, although the targets may be demographically reasonable Active Sports in the Durham region had little chance of achieving the target. Coaches from non white backgrounds have been identified as at risk of social exclusion from coaching (Kay et al., 2008). However, the Active Sports initiative could only recruit available coaches, regardless of their ethnic background.

It is important to note at this point that the Active Sports initiative was fundamentally designed to develop the talent of young people who have the desire and ability to become more involved in a particular targeted sport (Sport England, 1999b). This is likely to mean that individual choice and traditional attitudes towards specific sports would influence the balance of that participation. Consequently, any attempts to target particular groups could be met with resistance and even be deemed positive discrimination. It may, however, be the case that Active Sports will help to concentrate the efforts of individual sports to remove barriers to participation and involvement that exist for particular groups in society.

Having discussed the information collected through the registration forms, attention will now be given to the next section of the research process which involved the collection of

information through participant questionnaires (Appendix B). The participants were

required to provide responses to questions in three subject areas. The subject areas were the

Active Sports experience of the participants, their physical activity patterns and their

sporting preferences. The responses of the participants were considered as a whole and then

using the dependent variables of sport, gender and area of residence. This process was

undertaken in order to generate the information necessary to assess the quality of the

overall Active Sports experience of the participants which is an important part of the

overall research question. However, it is acknowledged here that the data generated

through this method only provided information regarding the opinions of the participants

and did not provide hard evidence of the quality of the participants Active Sports

experience. Employing such methods as direct observation to assess improvements in

performance would have facilitated more robust evaluation.

The Active Sports Experience of the Participants

Overall, the results of the enquiry into the opinions of the participants regarding the quality

of their experience of the Active Sports programme were very positive (Table 17) with the

majority of respondents indicating that they felt their experience of Active Sports had been

enjoyable, fulfilling and socially enhancing. The quality and effectiveness of the coaching

was also regarded favourably and the initiative was generally seen as good value for

money. When examined by sport it is, however, evident that this overall enthusiasm of the

participants for the quality of the Active Sports experience varied considerably between

sports (Figure 23). Participants involved in netball, basketball and athletics reported the

best experience whilst players of rugby league, rugby union showed less enthusiasm for the

overall quality of the experience, although it is important to emphasise that, even in these sports, the experience was still viewed as positive. One possible explanation for the disparity of views between sports is the nature of physical activities within these sports. Netball, basketball and athletics are essentially non-contact sports whereas, when participating in both rugby codes, physical contact is inevitable. In addition, basketball and netball are played on courts, sometimes indoors and athletics is a summer sport. In contrast, rugby union and rugby league are outdoor sports played on grass pitches. In light of this, and considering the research carried out by Sport England (2002a) which concludes that children report physical contact, bad weather and getting hot, sweaty, cold and dirty as the major reasons for non participation. This may help to explain the differences of opinion between participants in these sports but other factors such as the quality of coaching and facilities and the enjoyment of individuals may have contributed.

When examined by gender, the results regarding the overall quality of the Active Sports experience revealed that, although both groups reported a positive experience, female participants viewed this experience as more positive than males. The responses to specific questions within this section of the questionnaire showed that females had more fun and made more new friends (Figure 24) during Active Sports sessions supporting the view of Siraund et al. (2005) that girls regard sport as an opportunity for social interaction more than boys. It may also be the case that because girls had chosen to engage with the initiative that this had de-selected those with a less positive attitude to sport. Although this could also be said of boys, research by Weiss (2004) concludes that a greater portion of girls have a negative view of sport and therefore the views of female participants in an

initiative such as Active Sports would be more positive than those of the general population. The findings of this study therefore support this view.

The experience of the participants also differed when considered in relation to the area of residence of the respondents to the questionnaire (Figure 33). Children residing in an area of deprivation regarded their overall experience of Active Sports as better than those children from non priority areas. Specifically, participants from priority areas reported higher levels of enjoyment and enthusiasm and also responded more positively regarding the cost of the initiative and the standard of facilities than their counterparts. As children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to have the opportunity to take part in sport (Brodersen et al. 2005), the results of this study support the view that the positive attitude to the initiative expressed by this group reflects a greater appreciation of the opportunity to engage with Active Sports.

The overall opinions of the participants regarding the quality of the Active Sports experience reveal that in terms of the dependent variables used, the most positive participant profile is that of females living in an area of deprivation taking part in non contact sports. This would suggest that, although the inclusion of gender and area of residence targets in an initiative designed to contribute to the improvement of elite sport is questionable, individuals from these target groups experienced the most benefit from inclusion in Active Sports.

The responses to the section of the participation questionnaire relating to the physical activity patterns of the respondents will now be discussed.

The Physical Activity Patterns of the Participants

In 90% of cases, the respondents reported that as a result of Active Sports they took part in more sport, with 54% indicating that they participated much more often. The majority also expressed the desire to engage in more activity in the sports they play at the moment and in additional sports (Table 18). This suggests that, although Active Sports has had a positive impact on the participation in sport of young people in the Durham Sport area, it falls short of satisfying their perceived demand for sporting activities. However, this study does recognise that as the participants had chosen to take part in the initiative, they could be classified as 'sporty types' (Sport England, 2002a) and as such would be expected to want more activity.

When the overall impressions of the participants as to the impact of Active Sports activities are considered by sport (Figure 37), those involved in hockey, athletics and basketball were the most positive whereas respondents from tennis, swimming and cricket indicated a less positive impact. This may be partly due to the amount of sessions in which the respondents had taken part and the intensity of those sessions. On examination of the Active Sports database, the more positive sports in this regard had delivered more sessions than their counterparts; however, it is beyond the scope of this study to assess the level of intensity of those sessions. Additionally, the pre initiative level of activity of the respondents was not

known and this could have affected the impression they had of the overall effect of the

initiative on their activity patterns. That is to say, a child who had previously taken part in

very little sport before engaging with the initiative could report that a quite modest increase

in activities had increased their sporting involvement dramatically.

The results of the investigation into the impact of Active Sports on physical activity

patterns by gender (Figure 28) will now be discussed. In all cases, the responses to the

statements in this section of the questionnaire showed that the males regarded the impact of

the initiative to be greater than females. In view of the conclusions of Proston (2003)

concerning the relative lack of physical activity performed by females presented in the

Health Survey of England of 2003, it seems that the Active Sports initiative has done little

to redress the balance between male and female participation. Indeed, the more positive

response of the males to the statement about the extent of increase in sport participation as

a result of Active Sports suggests that the initiative has actually widened the divide in

gender participation levels. It is also interesting to note that the females showed less

willingness to participate in additional sports than males, supporting the views of Coakley

(2001) that males are more willing to use their bodies in active ways. This brings into

question whether in some instances girls effectively exclude themselves from some sports

and are not in fact socially excluded as concluded by Hargreaves (1994). However, even if

this is the case, the reasons for this apparent self exclusion may well be rooted in the

socialisation process which, as Sharpe (1994) proposes, develops strong and long lasting

concepts of gender roles. In addition, the influence of the quality of the early sporting

experiences of females (Kirk, 2004) may also be a factor in their later willingness to participate in sport.

The impact of the Active Sports initiative on the physical activity patterns of participants will now be discussed in relation to whether or not they reported living in an area of deprivation.

Overall, the results in this area of investigation revealed that participants living in an area of deprivation regarded the impact of the initiative on their physical activity patterns to be greater than those who did not (Figure 45). This would appear to support the views of Wilson (2002) and Coakley (1996) that the higher the person's class, the more likely they are to be a sports participant and a spectator. This being the case, the children living in non deprived areas may already have been participating in more sporting activities than their counterparts and Active Sports would consequently have less impact on the physical activity patterns of the less deprived group. Similarly, the impact on the residents of areas of deprivation of Active Sports would be greater if, as Brodersen (2005) contends, children from more deprived backgrounds exhibit more sedentary behaviour than more affluent young people. Whether either of these scenarios were the case in this instance is impossible to assess. However, it remains that the responses to the statements in this section by children from an area of deprivation indicate a more positive impact on activity levels and a greater willingness to take part in more activities in both their current and additional sports. It is important to note here that the responses of the children from non priority areas were also positive in this regard. This suggests that, at the very least, it can be concluded that the

initiative had a positive impact on young people's physical activity patterns, regardless of area of residence.

From the discussion regarding the impact of Active Sports on the physical activity patterns of the children engaged in the initiative, the conclusion can be drawn that the programme had an overall positive effect in terms of the amount of activity undertaken. However, of particular note here is that males reported a more positive impact than females which, in light of government concerns regarding female participation rates is concerning.

In concluding the discussion of the findings of the participant questionnaires, the results of the section investigating the sporting preferences of the children will be examined.

Sporting Preferences

The majority of participants expressed the desire to engage in more activities in additional sports to those in which they currently participate (Table 19).

The top five additional sports in which participants expressed a desire to participate were football, rugby, tennis, basketball and swimming. Interestingly, these were all sports included in the Active Sports initiative in the region, although football was only included as a female activity. This situation may be the result of inadequate availability of these sports or inefficient recruitment but in any case shows a preference of the participants for similar

sports to those identified by Mori (2003) as the most popular out of school sporting

activities of young children. In addition, the choices made by the children regarding the

additional sports in which they would like to take part indicates disagreement with McPhail

(2003) who concludes that young children do not support programmes dominated by

traditional sports. The only sport chosen in the top five by Active Sports participants that

did not feature in the top ten out of school sporting activities for children identified by the

Mori (2003) survey was rugby. This suggests that the children do want to participate in

traditional sports. The timing of the administration of the participation questionnaire was a

factor here as they were completed between March 2002 and March 2004. The England

team won the Rugby World Cup in 2003 and this success exerted a positive influence on

the desire of the participants to take part in a sport which at the time was enjoying a

particularly high profile in the media. The impact of a single sport major event can result in

an increase in awareness and participation. Gratton and Taylor (2000) detail how England's

success in the 1966 Football World Cup temporarily arrested the long term decline in post

war attendance levels at football league matches. In a literature review of the impact of

major sporting events, Brown and Massey (2001) affirm that The England and Wales

Cricket Board would argue that the 1999 Cricket World Cup had a positive effect in

encouraging young people to play cricket especially amongst children from ethnic minority

groups. The same review significantly presents evidence that the Rugby Football Union

attribute England's success at being runners up in the 1991 Rugby World Cup to have been

the catalyst for the creation of junior sections in approximately fifty percent of RFU

registered rugby clubs. Although the timing of the administration of the participant

questionnaires is important when considering the results in terms of sporting preferences,

the discussion here highlights the need for National Governing Bodies of sport to fully

exploit success in major events in order to increase awareness and participation in sport. The challenge is then to maintain that increased participation when the event is long gone.

Of the sports not already included in the initiative, football (which should be considered here as it was not available to male participants), badminton and rounders received the most votes as additional sports in which respondents would like to participate. The prominence of football is not surprising in view of the national popularity of the game traditionally with males and increasingly with females (DCMS 2007). Indeed, the choice of football as the most popular additional sport is supported by the findings of the DCMS Taking Part Survey which identifies football as the sport most often played by young people out of school lessons (DCMS, 2007). The choice of badminton as the 7[th] most popular additional sport is rather higher than the 15[th] position it attained in relation to the most played games both in and out of school as reported by Sport England (2002a). The DCMS survey (2007) does not include badminton in the list of most played sports out of school lessons but badminton does appear as the 4[th] most popular activity overall for young people. This would suggest that participation in badminton is positively influenced by activities in school lessons and further implies that a lack of out of school facilities and or initiatives impact negatively on that participation. Rounders has, however, enjoyed a recent increase in popularity and the number of children choosing it as an additional sport reflects this (Mori, 2003).

The preferences for additional activities of the participants in each sport (Table 20) will now be discussed. There is a lack of research linking the sporting preferences of individual

young children by type of sport and this is an area that could be examined in order to inform the recruitment process in sport. If research could identify strong links between sports already played and sports in which the same young people have a desire to play, but currently do not, then this information could be used to target individuals and expand the number of sports in which they participate. In support of this, research carried out by the University of Edinburgh for Sport Scotland (2002) concluded that in the UK recent schemes such as Active Sports encourage early specialisation in sport with children being exposed to sport specific basic skills rather than generic motor abilities. This results in children de-selecting themselves from the sport if they do not have, or perceive they do not have, the skills required to participate. Also this early specialisation leads to immature fundamental motor abilities being developed. Finally, because successful athletes often excel in a sport other than the one they are involved in initially so individuals need to develop a broad base of motor abilities to transfer successfully from one sport to another through early exposure to as many sporting activities as they desire. This review of literature also concludes that research suggests that fundamental motor abilities required to participate in sport are essential precursors to excellence and need to be developed by age 12 or 13 or success in sport is impossible (Sport Scotland, 2002).

In this study, football was ranked highest by participants in all sports with the exception of respondents from girls' football who were already engaged with the sport. Rugby also featured highly with players of all sport except netball, a situation which will be examined when considering sporting preferences in relation to gender. Tennis ranked highly with all sports except swimming and basketball, neither of which involves hitting or striking a ball and similarly, no cricketers chose swimming which otherwise featured prominently as an

additional sport. As well as investigating the specific additional sports in which the participants wished to take part, the number of additional activities was also considered by sport (Figure 46). This revealed that netball and hockey players requested the greatest number of additional sports and swimmers and basketball players the least. Although it is not possible to prove cause and effect here, these results suggest that further investigation of patterns of sporting preferences would be advantageous to both the process of talent identification and the recruitment of young people to more sports.

The process of talent identification used by Active Sports coaches in the Durham Sport area showed no evidence of any scientific base as recommended by Bompa (1999). The children were subjected to assessment days in order to be selected for development squads and, although continuous assessment may have been carried out by the coaches, these assessment days were the main focus of the talent identification process. These selection events were designed into Active Sports at stage 3 of the initiative and as such Sport England were responsible for their inclusion. As the use of isolated assessment of performance has been recognised as poor practice in talent identification (Sport Scotland, 2002), this inclusion seems inappropriate particularly in an initiative designed to impact on elite performance in the UK. The unreliability of this method of assessment and the general lack of scientific rigour in the talent identification process brings into question the legitimacy of the initiative as a vehicle for the development of potentially world class athletes.

The influence of gender in respect of the sporting preferences of the participants will now be examined.

The results of this area of investigation indicate that both male and female participants ranked football and rugby as the top two additional sports in which they would like to participate (Table 21). In the case of football, this would be an expected response from males and supports the findings of Mori (2003) which identified football as the most popular sport played by males outside of school lessons. This choice by females is, however, surprising for two reasons. Firstly, girls' football was already included in the suite of sports provided by the Active Sports initiative and, secondly, the survey by Mori 2003 reported young females as ranking football as the 8[th] most popular sport in which they participated frequently outside of school lessons. However, when this result is considered alongside the announcement by the Football Association in April 2002 that football had become the most popular female sport in the UK then it is more understandable (www.thefa.com). The inclusion of rugby as the second most popular sport is, as discussed earlier, probably a consequence of the timing of the questionnaire administration but was still unexpected for females, particularly in light of netball players ranking rugby low down on their list of preferred sports.

Other notable results with regard to sporting preferences by gender were that males ranked basketball, golf, rowing and cricket much higher than females which, with the exception of rowing, agrees with the findings of Mori (2003). As mentioned earlier, although these sports are played by females, they are more associated with male participation, particularly

in light of the media coverage they receive. Females, however, preferred badminton, rounders, volleyball, dancing and horse riding which, with the exception of volleyball, supports the Mori (2003) poll and are again activities with greater association to female participation. Perhaps more unusual was that neither sex included cycling as a preferred sport, particularly as several research projects have identified cycling as a prominent sport of choice for young people (Sport Scotland, 2002; DCMS, 2007; Sport England, 2002a; Mori, 2003). However, the respondents were not, as in the case of these reports, given a list of sports to choose from and as a consequence may regard the type of recreational cycling in which they participate as a mode of transport rather than a sport.

The range of additional sports in which females expressed an interest was greater than males, indicating a willingness to take part in a wider range of activities. However, the average number of additional sports requested by females was less than males. This would suggest females would like to participate in a greater variety of sports from horse riding to rugby, but are less likely to be engaged in as many sports as males. This supports the conclusions of Sport England (2002a) that 'sporty types' are characteristically male participating in a number of sports with considerable frequency and that there are above average proportions of girls classified as 'unadventurous' in that they participate in a limited range of sports.

The final area of investigation with regard to the sporting preferences of the Active Sports initiative is the influence of area of residence on those preferences.

The results of this area of investigation indicated considerable similarity between the sporting preferences of respondents residing in areas of deprivation and those from non deprived areas, particularly in the ranking each group gave to the top four sports. Notable exceptions to this agreement outside of these top sports include that the participants from areas of deprivation regarded swimming, rounders, rowing and street hockey as more desirable additional sports than their counterparts. Although, in the case of swimming and rowing, this may signify a desire to participate because of a current lack of opportunity due to the lack of required facilities and equipment, rounders and street hockey are activities which involve little extra equipment or specialist facilities and are easily organised by the children themselves. Respondents from non deprived areas reported a greater interest in netball, cricket, dancing, ice hockey and karate, all sports requiring considerably more facilities and in some cases expensive equipment and training. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of swimming, all of the sports in which the two groups reported different results, were minority sports not ranked in the top seven overall. This would further suggest that as these top seven sports received the vast majority of votes, there are far more similarities than differences between the sporting preferences of the children from diverse socio-economic groups. These results therefore concur with the findings of Roberts (1999) who concludes that members of all social strata do similar things in leisure time and that it is only the amount of activity that is determined by class. In addition, with the exception of karate and ice hockey, the additional sports mentioned by both groups do not involve excessive physical contact which supports the findings of Sport England (2002a) that the fear of injury is a barrier to participation for young people.

In concluding this section, the results of the information collected from participant questionnaires have informed the debate regarding the area of the research question

concerned with the quality of the overall Active Sports experience of those children engaged in the initiative and the discussion carried out here has highlighted important issues.

The opinions of the participants regarding the quality of their Active Sports experience were positive particularly in the case of females and children from deprived areas. The views of the children on the standard of coaching were also favourable from all sub groups involved in the initiative. In terms of the impact of the initiative on physical activity, the children again reported this to be of a positive nature, although information pertaining to the pre-initiative activity patterns of the participants would have served to better assess this impact. Furthermore, the activities provided fell short of satisfying the demands of the participants both in terms of the range of sports offered and the amount of activities offered. Significantly, males and children from areas of deprivation reported a greater impact on their physical activity patterns than females and those from non deprived areas. In addition, although the children experienced an improvement in their sporting skills, the lack of a rigorous talent identification process and indeed significant limitations in the process used makes it unlikely that all of the children with the most potential to excel in sport will be provided through Active Sports with the opportunity to reach that potential. The sporting preferences expressed by the participants exposed deficiencies in the provision of activities included in the initiative in that a significant number of respondents requested additional sports to be included that were already part of the programme. This again reduces the possibility of identifying talented individuals capable of progressing to elite level. The differences in the sporting preferences of the participants and the activities

provided by Active Sports also highlight the need to consult with young people regarding the sports they prefer at the design stage of sports development interventions such as Active Sports which is a view supported by McPhail (2003).

The results of the coach questionnaires (appendix C) will now be discussed in order to consider the portion of the research question relating to the overall Active Sports experience of the coaches. To this end, the areas investigated were the opinions of the coaches regarding the effectiveness of Active Sports as an intervention strategy to develop elite sport and the experience and performance of the participants during their engagement with the programme. Again, on reflection, investigation of the actual achievements of the initiative with regard to the effectiveness of Active Sports would have served to enable comparison of the coaches opinions with those achievements or indeed failures.

Overall, the opinions of the coaches regarding the potential impact of the Active Sports initiative were generally positive (Table 26). The vast majority of coaches expressed the belief that Active Sports would make a valuable contribution to children's sporting opportunities which concurs with the views of the participants who on average reported an increase in their sporting involvement as a direct result of the initiative. Talent development was seen by the coaches as an area in which Active Sports would make a positive impact and again the opinions of the children support this view in that they reported that their skills had improved through involvement with the programme. However, the position of the coaches and participants regarding talent development is at odds with that of the Active Sports mid term report which sees this as an issue that needed to be

addressed with the inclusion in the scheme of talent camps to bridge the gap between Active Sports and World Class programmes (Sport England, 2002b). The coaches also expressed the opinion that Active Sports would make a valuable contribution to sports equity although it is debatable whether their knowledge of the initiative which will be discussed later could allow them to come to this conclusion. Responses of the coaches regarding the contribution of Active Sports to the physical activity patterns of participants were also positive and again agreed with the views of the children. The enthusiasm the coaches showed for the impact of the coach education courses was evident and supports the conclusions of Knight, Kavanagh and Page (2005) that Active Sports indeed had a positive impact on coach education in the UK.

 The coaches were, however, less certain that Active Sports would improve club development. This again may be due to a lack of knowledge of the design and objectives of the initiative and a product of viewing the scheme as simply a series of coaching opportunities for children. In any case, the final Active Sports report (Knight, 2005) disagrees with this view in reporting a significant enhancement in club development as a result of the Active Sports programme. The coaches were also less enthusiastic about the potential impact of the initiative on the development of world class athletes. This would seem to be supported by Sport England (2002b) by the aforementioned modification of the programme designed to bridge the gap in talent development.

When the opinions of the coaches were analysed by the sport in which they coach, those coaches delivering sessions in hockey, girls' football and netball expressed the highest opinion of the potential impact of Active Sports (Figure 57). As these sports are readily

associated with female participation and considering that the coaches were confident that the initiative would make a valuable contribution to sport equity, these opinions seem to be linked. However, netball and girls' football were not assigned gender targets and although they could therefore contribute to the overall participation of females, they could not affect in real terms the balance of gender equity within the initiative. The point here appears to be that the coaches believed that Active Sports would positively impact on female participation by the inclusion of female dominated sports. This again brings into question the sports offered by the Active Sports programme as neither netball or hockey are identified by the Mori poll (2003) or the DCMS study (2007) as among the most popular sports in which children participate frequently out of school lessons. This would, therefore, suggest that the inclusion of these sports in the initiative owed more to an attempt to increase the number of females participating in Active Sports than to providing activities in which young people would like to take part.

The positive opinions of the coaches of female dominated sports also appear to be linked to the responses of the coaches by gender. As mentioned in the results section, coaches in these sports are predominantly female and therefore it is not surprising that female coaches expressed a greater belief that the Active Sports initiative would have a positive impact on the development of youth sport. This development according to the ethos of Active Sports involves the inclusion of both participants and coaches from target groups and therefore coaches from those groups would be expected to recognise the impact of the initiative in this regard. Similarly, the coaches from an area of deprivation had a higher opinion of the initiative than those from a non deprived area which again seems to link to the overall view

of the coaches from target groups that Active Sports would have a positive impact on sports

development.

The responses of the coaches to statements regarding their perception of the experience and

performance of the participants during Active Sports sessions (Table 27) show that they

viewed that experience as fulfilling and the performance of the participants as encouraging.

All of the coaches reported that the children had fun during Active Sports activities which

reflects the views of 96% of the participants in that they reported having fun all or most of

the time. As the creation of sporting activities that are fun and enjoyable for young people

has been identified by Sport Coach UK (2006) and reinforced by Mountjoy et al. (2008) as

a crucial part of the coaching process, the views of the coaches and participants support the

view that Active Sports was successful in achieving this aim. The views of the coaches and

participants did, however, differ when asked whether the participants would like to

participate in more activities in their current sport. The responses of the coaches were

considerably more optimistic (21%) than the views of the participants. However, there was

an overall majority of children (58%) expressing a wish for more sessions which is another

indication of their enjoyment. Although the proportion of children wanting more sessions

in their current sport may seem rather low, this must be viewed in conjunction with their

requests for additional sports. It may be that the participants were perfectly happy with the

quality of the provision in their current sport but simply wanted a wider range of choice.

In terms of the coaches' perception of the understanding of the participants, 92% either

strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'the children appear to understand what is

required of them' compared with 91% of the participants reporting understanding what

they were supposed to be doing at least most of the time. Similarly, 84% of coaches at least agreed that the children concentrated adequately during activities compared with 86% of the participants reporting never or not often being bored. When asked to respond to the statement 'the level of performance has improved' 79% of the coaches strongly agreed or agreed and this is supported by the view of 87% of the children that they perceived that their skills had improved either a lot or quite a lot as a result of engagement with Active Sports. This accuracy of physical self perception of the participants is important and is another indicator of good practice in coaching as identified by Sports Coach UK (2006). The responses of the coaches to the last three statements and their close agreement with the views of the children indicate that the coaches were aware of whether learning on the part of the participant was actually taking place and perhaps more importantly when it was not. The views of the coaches and children regarding the quality of the participants' Active Sports experience and improvement in performance suggest that the coaching provision was of a high standard resulting in an effective learning experience for the children. This is further supported when the perception of the coaches with regard to the quality of the participants' Active Sports experience is examined by sport, revealing that, with the exception of tennis (figure 65), the views of the coaches again closely resemble those of the participants (figure 37).

When analysed by gender, the results show that female coaches had a higher opinion of the Active Sports experience of the children. However, unlike the opinions of the coaches regarding the impact of the initiative this does not appear to relate to the sports in which they coached. In addition, coaches from an area of deprivation were less enthusiastic about the experience of the children than those from non priority areas which is the opposite

result from that obtained with regard to the impact of Active Sports. This suggests that

although coaches from areas of deprivation believed that the initiative had the potential to

have a positive impact on sports development, they saw room for improvement in the

current experience of the participants

The overall opinions expressed by the coaches regarding their own Active Sports

experience were positive which supports the findings of Sport England (2002b) which

reported that 70% of Active Sports coaches had found their experience of the initiative to

be rewarding and worthwhile. The most positive views of the potential contribution of the

initiative to the development of youth sport were expressed by female coaches, those

coaching in female dominated sports and coaches from an area of deprivation. This would

suggest that as these coaches were either representatives of target groups (Sport England,

1999) or engaged in coaching females these factors had been influential in forming their

opinions regarding the initiative. Opinions were positive towards the impact of the

initiative on coach development and equity in sport. However, although Active Sports was

viewed by the coaches as an appropriate vehicle for talent development, they were less sure

that this development would extend to elite performance. Rather, the indications of the

coaches suggest that the design of Active Sports is more suited to increasing the number of

athletes involved in the participation and performance levels of the traditional sports

development continuum (Hylton, 2001). In this regard and considering the views of the

coaches pertaining to the experience and performance of the Active Sports participants, the

initiative can be seen as a success. According to the opinions of both the participants and

the coaches, the programme was seen as an enjoyable experience characterised by good

coaching practice resulting in enhancement of performance. However, the degree of that

enhancement and the apparent limitations in the talent identification and development process would not seem appropriate for the development of elite athletes.

Having discussed the findings of the study generated through the participant and coach questionnaires, attention will now be given to the data collected through participant and coach interviews in order to further examine the suitability of the Active Sports initiative as the first step to sporting excellence.

The participant interviews (appendix F) were carried out in order to inform the discussion regarding the sporting involvement of the participants and factors influencing that involvement. Specifically, the areas of investigation were the children's:

- sporting knowledge and preferences;

- parental sporting influence;

- sporting involvement;

- Active Sports knowledge.

The results of the sporting knowledge and preferences section of the participant interview showed that, although more females were able to name a favourite player in their active sport, only 20% of participants in netball and hockey were able to do so. This suggests that the females had similar knowledge of their sport to males on the macro level, but players of sports associated with female participation were less knowledgeable. This lack of knowledge could be attributable to a paucity of media coverage of female sports as reported by Duncan (1994) and more recently by the Women's Sports Foundation (2007).

This is further supported by the choice of male sportspeople as the top 3 favourite players

in all sports, underlining the findings of Vescio (2003) that male role models in sport are

easier to identify than female. Interestingly only 30% of the children reported that their

active sport was also their favourite sport which adds weight to the argument that the

choice of sports included in the initiative was questionable and, as McPhail (2003)

concludes, the views of children should be considered at the design stage of initiatives such

as Active Sports in order to formulate a product that fulfils the needs of the consumer. Of

the sports not included in the initiative, male football was by far the most popular followed

by rounders, pool/snooker and roller blading/skateboarding, with the exception of

pool/snooker all sports identified by Sport England (1999) as participated in frequently by

young people out of school lessons. It is perhaps not surprising to note at this point that,

regardless of their popularity with young people, rounders and rollerblading/skateboarding

do not feature in the list of sports in which the public would most like to see the UK

successful during international competition (North, 2001) and as such stood little chance of

inclusion in the programme. Furthermore, as was reported through the participation

questionnaires, females wished to take part in a fewer number of sports and therefore, as

pointed out by Faucette (1995), the non availability of these sports increases the likelihood

of non-participation. This highlights the problem that an initiative designed to increase

sporting success at an excellence level as well as increase participation of particular groups

in society is likely to achieve neither.

The exclusion of male football in the programme is perhaps understandable in that the

development of elite footballers is the domain of the professional clubs through a network

of academies and centres of excellence. However, it would seem reasonable to conclude that the present system in football could only benefit from any identification and development of talented individuals capable of entering the professional development continuum through initiatives such as Active Sports. At the very least, the inclusion of male football would have provided a further stage on which young players could demonstrate their capability to representatives of professional clubs and potentially progress along the pathway to excellence.

The parental sporting influence section of the interview revealed several interesting results that should be considered when examining the participation of young people in sport. Overall, 39% of the participants had a parent who was currently playing sport or had played in the past and it was twice as likely that the sporting parent would be the father. Males also reported greater parental support for sporting involvement than females. This reinforces the mass of research concluding that males participate in more sport than females (for example, Proston, 2003; Coakley, 1999; Birrell, 1994; Scraton, 1990; Scraton, 1992).

The extent of parental influence on the sport that young people play is highlighted by over half of the children whose parents play or have played sport indicating their favourite sport to be the same as the chosen sport of the active parent. This, along with the majority of children reporting taking part in sport with the same sex parent, supports the findings of Cote (1999) and Kay (2000) that the participation patterns of same sex parents are a strong influence on the engagement of young people with sport. The sex of the parent with which

the children take part in sport also appears to be influenced by area of residence. Children

from areas of deprivation reported that 77% of sporting activity with parents took place

with the father alone and none with the mother alone. This compares with participants from

non deprived areas reporting only 36% of activity with fathers alone and 43% with

mothers. Possible explanations for this are that those from a priority area have less access

to private transport (Hoefer, 2001) which may affect the ability of the mother to take part

and may not have sufficient income for all of the family to participate (Kay, 2004).

However, the relative lack of involvement of fathers from non deprived areas compared

with their counterparts could indicate that the participation of parents in sport with their

children is linked to higher unemployment and more free time of fathers in priority areas.

In addition, seven out of ten participants who received encouragement to take part in sport

had at least one 'sporty' parent, agreeing with Clelland (2005) who concluded that

physically active parents provide more support and encouragement than sedentary parents

for their children to participate in sport and physical activity. This parental influence is

particularly strong on young males with 65% receiving encouragement from parents

compared with 35% of females which is concerning in light of the findings of Kay (2004)

that the gendered practices parents adopt towards children contribute to deep rooted gender

expectations that negatively impact on girl's sport involvement.

The sporting involvement of the children in schools is a source of concern as, although

86% take part in school sporting activities, 14% do not. This is concerning because Active

Sports was designed to provide the opportunity for those already involved in sport to

develop their talents and therefore 14% of those interviewed do not fall into this category.

Furthermore, in view of this apparent lack of participation, the intention of the present

government, as reported by Webster (2007), for schools to provide five hours of physical

activity per week seems optimistic. This is particularly the case as the findings of this study

are supported by Sport England (2002a) which concludes that 18% of children are not

frequently participating in any one sporting activity in schools. Although there was no

difference indicated by gender in the overall participation in school sport reported in this

study, fewer females had the opportunity to take part in their favourite sport. This is a

further indication of the need to consider the type and variety of sport offered to young

people, and in particular girls, if participation is to be increased and ultimately excellence

achieved.

With regard to sports participation out of school lessons, 59% of interviewees said that they

played sport with friends in their free time which is considerably fewer than the 88% and

85% reported by the DCMS (2007) and Mori (2003) respectively. It should, however, be

noted here that the DCMS and Mori studies simply enquired about organised sports

participation out of school lessons and made no reference to playing with friends, a factor

that could have influenced the responses of the children. In terms of participation out of

school by gender, males taking part in Active Sports were twice as likely to report playing

sport with friends than females. This general trend supports the findings of Sport England

(2002a); however, the scale of the disparity between the responses of girls and boys found

in this study is far greater than in the Sport England report and cannot be accounted for by

the nature of the question. Rather, it may indicate regional differences in participation by

gender of young people, a variable not considered by the national studies carried out by

Sport England, Mori and the DCMS. The importance of the influence of demographics on participation rates is further supported by the findings of this study that, although interviewees living in an area of deprivation were much more likely (78%) to play sport with friends out of school lessons than children from non deprived areas (46%), both percentages fall well below the national figures. Considering the predominance of priority areas in the Durham Sport region, this would indicate that low participation of children in these areas would impact heavily on overall participation rates both generally and by gender.

The reasons the interviewees gave as motivations for taking part were in view of the body of research on the subject (Sports Coach UK, 2006; Stern, 1990; Weiss, 2004) not surprisingly dominated by 'having fun' with 84% of respondents rating fun as the primary motivator for participation. Other reasons for taking part which featured prominently were 'to improve performance', 'because friends play', 'to keep fit', 'winning' and 'to become a professional', all factors identified by Chambers (1991) as important influences on children's participation in sport. When considering the motivators of the children in this study by gender, some important difference emerge. Although both sexes rated fun as the highest influence on participation, males regarded improved performance, winning, keeping fit and becoming a professional as greater motivators than females who regarded friends playing as a much more powerful motivator than males. These results support the findings of Siraud (2005) that boys are more competitive and girls are more interested in the social opportunities that sports participation provides. Specifically, the greater emphasis

placed by males on becoming a professional concurs with the view of Hill (1993) that professional sport is the 'dream of males' (p.49).

In contrast to those with aspirations to become elite performers, this study identified that 20% of interviewees could be classified as 'tolerators', a group defined by Sport England (2002a) as those children 'who participate in an average level of sport but tend not to enjoying so'. Slightly more females (23%) than males (17%) were classified in this way as a result of their indifferent responses to enquiries regarding the reasons they participate in sport. This agrees with the findings of Sport England (2002a) in concluding that slightly more girls fall into this category but it is perhaps a surprising finding of a study involving young people who had supposedly chosen to participate.

The greater enjoyment of sport by males is reflected in the self perception of the interviewees which indicated that males regarded both their fitness and skill levels as higher than females. These results confirm the view of Coakley (2001) that girls accept the notion that boys are physically superior and the assertion of Carroll and Loumidis (2001) that young males have a higher level of perceived sporting competence than young females.

The Active Sports knowledge of the children was also assessed through interview resulting in the discovery that 65% of the respondents had no concept of what the Active Sports initiative is. In view of the age of some of the interviewees, this is perhaps understandable; however, it does highlight a lack of communication with the children to explain the process

in which they were participating. Surely a basic knowledge of the pathways Active Sports was attempting to provide and the opportunities made available through these pathways would have informed the participants in a way which would better prepare them to make considered decisions regarding what they could achieve through engagement with the Active Sports programme. Nevertheless, the lack of knowledge of the participants vindicates the methodological decision to administer all questionnaires and interviews at Active Sports sessions in an attempt to differentiate between those activities associated with Active Sports and other sporting involvement.

In concluding the discussion of the findings of the participant interviews, participants were asked if they had any suggestions as to how Active Sports sessions could be improved. Only 34% of interviewees made suggestions, although this may indicate a general satisfaction with the quality and content of the coaching they were receiving. Of those who did contribute, almost half requested more competitive games supporting the view of Sports Coach UK (2006) that young people are more interested in the final performance than the practice involved in producing that performance. This further emphasised by suggestions made by the participants of a need for 'less talk' and 'less hard work' during sessions

Having discussed the findings of the participant interviews, the results of the coach interviews will be considered.

Coach interviews were carried out in order to generate the necessary information to address the part of the research question relating to the coaches' perception of the impact of Active Sports. The topics investigated were the coach's knowledge of and opinions on the Active Sports initiative, the impact of the initiative on their coaching, the participation and performance of the children and any suggestions the coaches might have to improve the scheme.

Although the majority of coaches correctly identified Active Sports as a national sport development programme, their specific knowledge with regard to the aims and objectives of the initiative and how it was designed to fit in with Active Schools and Active Communities was poor. Perhaps the most concerning aspect of this lack of knowledge was that the majority of coaches interviewed regarded the main aim of the initiative to be to introduce children into new sports. As Active Sports was specifically designed to cater for children who had already gained experience in their chosen sport, this showed a lack of understanding of the level of the participants they were coaching. Potentially this lack of understanding could result in the delivery of sessions that were merely duplicating coaching that the children had experienced before.

The most popular motivations for becoming an Active Sports coach were reported as 'enjoyment',' putting something back into sport' and 'personal development' which were all factors identified by Lyle (1997) as important factors in the motivation of coaches. Interestingly, 40% of coaches regarded extra income as important in their decision to engage with the Active Sports programme. Considering the findings of Lyle (1997) that

only 22% of coaches considered financial incentive as important and the conclusions of

Sport Scotland (2006) that the majority of coaches would like to be paid for their services,

the findings of this study appear to confirm a steady trend towards a requirement of

payment by coaches. This is further supported by the assertion of almost a third of coaches

that Active Sports coaching had replaced previously unpaid coaching and highlights the

increased commercialisation of coaching as a result of increased funding in sport and

initiatives such as Active Sports.

In terms of their personal development, the coaches were positive about the impact of the

initiative with six out of ten reporting that they had improved as a coach as a direct result of

involvement in the Active Sports programme. Gaining coaching qualifications and more

coaching experience were considered by the coaches to be the most influential factors in

this perceived improvement and this is reinforced by half of the interviewees reporting

coaching more as a consequence of Active Sports and all of them regarding the coach

education courses as important. Nevertheless, four out of ten coaches said that the

completion of coach education courses should be voluntary and not a specific requirement

of the initiative. This would indicate agreement with the findings of Sport Scotland (2006)

that the need to gain qualifications can be a barrier to people becoming involved in

coaching sport.

When asked about the inclusion of equity targets in the design of the Active Sport

initiative, the coaches were generally not aware of their existence but when made aware the

majority were of the opinion that the programme should concentrate on improving the

performance of the children and not be hindered by the need to meet equity targets. In view

of this, it is not surprising that none of the coaches interviewed had a strategy for meeting

the equity targets, although in fairness, this was primarily the domain of the Active Sports

manager and the Sports Activators. The support of the Sport Activators and the provision

of education courses were both rated as good by the coaches, although some concern was

expressed about the amount of paperwork needed to fulfil the requirements of Durham

Sport. The general view of the coaches was that they simply wanted to arrive and deliver a

coaching session to the children that turned up, without being concerned with equity issues

or the completion of forms. This is perhaps surprising in view of the results of the coach

questionnaires which showed that the vast majority of coaches (90%) agreed that the

completion of up to date registers and the accurate registration of the participants was an

important part of the coaching process.

The views of the coaches regarding the motivations of the participants to take part in sport

closely reflected the opinions of the children which indicated that the coaches were in tune

with the environment necessary to provide a positive coaching experience. However, the

coaches had a lower perception of the fitness levels of the children than the participants

themselves. Concern was also expressed over the body composition of some of the children

which, although beyond the scope of this study is not unexpected in view of the much

reported alleged obesity epidemic in children. In line with the findings of the coach

questionnaire that the coaches had a less than optimistic view of the suitability of the

initiative as a vehicle for producing elite athletes, none of the coaches had identified

participants that they felt were capable of achieving that status. However, half of the coaches expressed the view that it was 'too early to tell'.

There was a general reluctance of the coaches to offer suggestions for the improvement of Active Sports. However, there was the indication from a small number of coaches that if the initiative was designed to produce world class athletes, there was too much emphasis on participation and not enough on excellence. This reluctance to offer suggestions for improvement could be linked to the lack of in depth knowledge of the initiative and as such gives cause for concern. As the coaches and indeed the participants were important stakeholders in Active Sports, provision of information regarding the aims and objectives of the programme was sadly lacking.

This lack of information apart, the effectiveness of the Durham Sport initiative in delivering the Active Sports initiative in accordance with the requirements of Sport England is not under question. Indeed the monitoring process, accuracy of coach and participant profiling and the production by Durham Sport employees of both qualitative and quantitative evidence of success as required by Sport England were of a high standard. The issue here is not how well the initiative was delivered in the Durham region but whether the programme was suitable for the intended purpose of providing the first step to sporting excellence. This issue will be addressed in the next chapter which will draw conclusions from the discussion presented here and make recommendations for both further research and issues to be considered when designing future sports development programmes.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

Conclusions

The ultimate aim of this study was to establish whether the Active Sports initiative was an effective vehicle to ensure young people's progress through a series of pre-determined stages towards elite sporting performance. In considering this question the design and delivery of the Active Sports programme were investigated using registration forms, questionnaires and interviews. The results of this investigation have highlighted important issues which enable conclusions to be drawn regarding the suitability for purpose of the initiative in relation to the research question. Areas which require further investigation in order to inform the design of future sports development intervention strategies for children have also emerged and will be outlined in this chapter.

The appropriateness of including equity targets in an initiative designed to positively impact on elite sport and bridge the gap to World Class programmes is the first area of contention. It is evident from the results of this study that the Active Sports initiative in the Durham Sport area has been successful in providing more opportunities for children and coaches to participate in sport. However, with the exception of an overt attempt by the organisers of rugby league activities, there is little evidence of an attempt to influence the equality of outcome (Bagglihole, 1997) of the initiative through proactive intervention. Rather, a gestural approach to the equity targets appears to have been employed (Swinney, 2005) in that Durham Sport and the individual Sports Coordinators seemed confident that these targets would be met without the implementation of specific equal opportunities policies. The failure to meet the set equity targets is therefore probably a consequence of an holistic approach to the initiative, which attracted participants in line with pre-initiative

trends in the individual sports. This apparent lack of commitment to proactively achieve the equity targets brings into question their inclusion in the initiative. Nevertheless, more important in this regard, is the potential hindrance of these targets to the objectives of the programme through the redirection of effort and resources away from providing opportunities for sporting development and the consequent discrimination against non priority groups. If the purpose of an initiative is to improve health then there may be a need to target certain groups in society in order to increase physical activity levels. However, future initiatives like Active Sports should either not aspire to produce potential elite athletes or refrain from including equity targets. In plain terms, it is questionable whether it is reasonable to simply attract as many young people to a sporting initiative and especially to target particular groups in society, coach them in a basic way and then expect to produce world class athletes. The notion that individual sports development initiatives can encompass all levels of the sports development continuum is fine if the major aim is to increase participation but elite development requires specific initiatives to identify and develop talent. Grass roots development should occur in schools and in this respect the Active Schools initiative was fit for purpose. The participation level of the sports development continuum should involve initiatives that encourage mass involvement and robust talent identification should be employed at this stage to feed suitable athletes into specific performance initiatives. If top class coaching and athlete support is evident at the performance stage then excellence for the most talented athletes will inevitably follow.

Although this report suggests that Active Sports had a positive impact on physical activity patterns of the participants, in particular females and those from areas of deprivation, specific physical activity interventions, good health education and an increase in P.E. in

schools seem more appropriate methods of addressing the lack of physical activity undertaken by children. It may, however, be the case that Active Sports will help to concentrate the efforts of individual sports to remove barriers to participation and involvement that exist for particular groups in society.

Regardless of whether Active Sports should have been designed to include equity targets, it is the conclusion of this study that the initiative did not achieve those targets in the Durham Sport region. This resulted in the initiative falling between two stools with regard to achieving these targets and providing pathways to sporting excellence.

The Active Sports experience as reported by the participants was certainly enjoyable and fulfilling but whether that experience was of a nature that would develop children into potentially elite athletes is not so certain. There is no evidence from the coaches that the initiative would lead to more world class athletes and indeed most of them were unaware that this was the ultimate objective of Active Sports. Instead, the opinion of the coaches was that the programme would increase physical activity and the amount of sport in which the children participated but would not necessarily make a significant contribution to the development of elite sport. They therefore regarded the initiative as directed firmly at the participation level of the sports development continuum which although part of its remit, was not the ultimate aim. The fact that Sport England introduced talent camps mid way through Active Sports in an attempt to bridge the gap with World Class programmes is an indication of the limitations of the scheme as originally designed. However, the lack of a rigorous and scientific talent identification process brings into question whether the individuals chosen to participate in those camps were in fact those with the greatest

potential to excel in sport. This being the case, there is a need for future initiatives of this nature to address the talent identification mechanisms that they employ in order to ensure that talented children are identified and not discouraged through non selection. In this regard, it is a further recommendation of this study that more research be carried out to investigate the groups of sports in which children participate to establish links between patterns of participation in order to inform the talent identification process.

When compared with the sporting preferences of the participants, the choice of sports for inclusion in Active Sports were not necessarily the current sports of choice of the target group. The sports chosen are of a traditional nature and are representative of those sports in which the public would like to see the UK successful in international competition (North, 2001). It does not appear that the views of children regarding their sporting preferences were considered when designing Active Sports but rather that the sports offered were those which the sporting infrastructure could deliver. Although it would not be reasonable to include sports in which facilities for delivery were not present, the exclusion of male football seems unusual considering the popularity it enjoys. Also, the inclusion of netball and girls' football which have no male participation and not balancing this with male only sports appears to be an attempt to give Active Sports every chance of achieving overall gender equity targets. The need to consult children on the sports to be included in initiatives such as Active Sports is essential in order to maximize participation. This is particularly true in the case of girls as the findings of this study regarding the varied nature of their sporting preferences highlights. However, taking all of the factors that contributed to the overall Active Sports experience of the participants into consideration, this report concludes that the participants regarded their involvement in Active Sports as very positive.

In this respect, the initiative can be said to have been successful even though the outcome of that experience is unlikely to result in a major impact on elite sport in the UK. There is a need to identify talented children early and accelerate their sporting development whereas Active Sports simply encouraged children to continue their involvement in sport. The two concepts are completely different and inevitably result in diverse outcomes.

The opinions of the coaches were very positive with regard to their overall experience of the Active Sports initiative. The coaches expressed the view that the initiative had made a valuable contribution to their personal development as coaches and, in this respect, the scheme can be viewed as a success. In terms of the perception of the coaches regarding the experience of the participants, this supported the opinions of the children, and therefore gave depth to those opinions. However, the lack of in depth knowledge, particularly of the coaches regarding the structure, aims and objectives of the programme, brings into question the validity of the views of the coaches. This is particularly the case with regard to views of the coaches about the contribution of Active Sports to the development of children's sport as, in order to make informed responses in this regard, greater knowledge of the initiative would be required. With this in mind, this study concludes that there was a lack of information disseminated to both the participants and coaches regarding the purpose of the Active Sports initiative. As the opinions of the people involved are a major source of information when evaluating any sporting initiative, future schemes should ensure those involved are better informed.

The findings of this study in relation to the sporting involvement of the participants underpin previous research into what motivates children to participate in sport particularly

in that the experience needs to be fun and enjoyable. Similarly the considerable influence of the family on participation is well documented and is reinforced by the results of this study. However, differences in the involvement of parents in sports activities with their children depending on whether or not they live in an area of deprivation have emerged through this study. Considering the extent to which parental involvement influences the participation of children and the lower levels of participation in priority areas this highlights the need for more research in this area.

In concluding this thesis, the original research question will be examined in relation to the findings of the study. The delivery of the Active Sport initiative in the Durham Sport area can be viewed as a success in that it provided good quality coaching to a large number of children who enjoyed the activities a great deal. The initiative also provided coaches with the opportunity to gain experience and qualifications in a paid environment. The management of the scheme by the Durham Sport Partnership in accordance with the requirements of Sport England was effective and, as one of the first Partnerships to deliver Active Sports, set the standards for others to follow. The Partnership that was established and developed through the life of the initiative is perhaps one of the most important outcomes of the scheme as it provides the infrastructure that facilitates the delivery of any future government sports initiatives. However, was the Active Sports initiative the first step to sporting excellence? In the sense that it provided the aforementioned opportunities for participation and succeeded in delivering a positive experience to both participants and coaches, the answer is yes. Nevertheless, in terms of the capability of the initiative to impact on the development of children's sport in such a way that would produce athletes ready to step into World Class programmes, the answer is no. The design of Active Sports

was never appropriate to fulfil such a role in that the stages of the initiative were more suited to developing athletes to perhaps county standard. If some of those athletes progressed to elite programmes then that was the result of an abundance of talent or involvement in more intense development programmes through the National Governing Body structure. Active Sports was designed to be equitable and in the light of wider government policy, this was perhaps inevitable but this resulted in Partnerships simply 'playing the numbers game' in order to obtain funding from Sport England to continue to deliver the initiative. Active Sports must be congratulated for providing the opportunity for more children to participate in more sport but mass participation does not necessarily produce excellence. The consequent impact of the pressure to meet numerical participation targets together with limitations in the design of the initiative meant that the aspiration of Active Sports to feed athletes directly into World Class programmes and thus be the first step to sporting excellence was not realised.

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Appendices

Appendix A

A Typical Active Sports Partnership Structure

Figure 1. Typical Active Sports Partnership Structure

Sport England ← National Lottery

Funding

Partnership Manager

Active Sports Manager

Sports Action Groups, comprising representatives from
- Universities
- National Governing Bodies of sport
- Sports organisations and clubs
- Schools
- L.E.A
- Local Authorities

Partnership Service Action Group comprising:
- Club Development Officers
- Coach Development Officers
- Sports Activators
- Sportscoach UK

Partnership Services
- Training courses
- Coaching database
- Information
- Advice

Sports Action Plans

Volunteers   Young People   Coaches   Clubs   Officials   Development Officers

Activities → Participant Subscriptions

Monitoring Evaluation

Appendix B

Participant Questionnaire

<p style="color:green">Durham Sport Partnership</p>

<p style="color:green">"Active Sports"</p>

<p style="color:green">Research Survey</p>

<table>
<tr><td>Code No. (leave blank)</td></tr>
</table>

Dear Active Sports Participant

We would be very grateful if you would take a few minutes to answer the questions in this survey, in order that we can find out what you think about taking part in "Active Sports".

It is very important that you tell us what you think, as this will help us improve the scheme for the future.

All of your answers will be kept confidential (we will not tell anybody your answers). Please answer all the questions and return all of the sheets in the envelope provided.

Thank you for taking part and helping us to make "Active Sports" activities as good as we can.

Name: _____   **Age:** _____

Address: _____   **Date:** _____

_____   **Post Code:** _____

Tel. No. _____   **Sport:** _____

For each of the following question, put a cross in the box that best describes your feelings

Question 1
I have fun at Active Sports activities

All the time	**Most of the time**	**Sometimes**	**Not very often**	**Never**
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 2.

I look forward to my next Active Sports activity

Always   **Most times**   **Sometimes**   **Not very often**   **Never**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Question 3.

I have made new friends at Active Sports activities

A lot   **Quite a lot**   **Some**   **A few**   **None**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Question 4.

The Active Sports coaches are friendly

All of the time   **Most of the time**   **Sometimes**   **Not very often**   **Never**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Question 5.

During the Active Sports activities, I understand what I am supposed to be doing

All of the time   **Most of the time**   **Sometimes**   **Not very often**   **Never**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Question 6.

The Active Sports coaches have taught me

A lot of new skills	Some new skills	No new skills
☐	☐	☐

Question 7.

Because of Active Sports activities, my skills have improved

Very much	Quite a lot	A bit	Not much	Not at all
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 8.

I am bored during Active Sports activities

All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Not very often	Never
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 9.

I would like to go to Active Sports activities in the sport I play at the moment

More often	The same amount of times	Less often
☐	☐	☐

Question 10.

Because of Active Sports activities, I take part in sport

Much more often than before	A bit more often than before	About the same as before	Less than before
☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 11.

How many times have you taken part in Active Sports activities?

Once	2-5 times	6-10 times	11-15 times	16-20 times	More than 20 times
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 12.

How old were you when you first took part in an Active Sports activity?

Please state | years old |

Question 13.

Do you think the amount you pay for Active Sports activities is

Too much	About right	Not enough
☐	☐	☐

Question 14.

Do you think the pitches/courts you use during Active Sports activities are

Excellent	Good	O.K.	Not very good	Poor
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Question 15.

How do you travel to Active Sports activities?

Car   **Bus**   **Bicycle**   **Walk**   **Other (please state)**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   [   ]

Question 16.

How long does it take for you to travel to Active Sports activities?

Less than   **10-20 mins**   **20-30 mins**   **More than**
10 mins   **30 mins**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Question 17.

I would like to take part in Active Sports activities in more sports

☐   ☐

Yes   **No**

Question 18.

If you answered yes to question 17, in which sports would you like to take part?
(Write the sports in the box)

[   ]

Thank you again for taking part in the survey, as the information you have given us will be very valuable in improving the sports coaching you receive.

If you or your parents have any queries or any questions that you would like to ask regarding this survey, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Graham Cook who is the person responsible for monitoring and evaluating "Active Sports" in Durham on 01429 299276.

Appendix C

Coach Questionnaire

Durham Sport Partnership

"Active Sports"

Research Survey

Dear Active Sports Coach

We would be very grateful if you would take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire, in order that we can obtain qualitative data regarding the "Active Sports" initiative.
This survey forms an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation process and will help to identify areas for consideration and improvement as the scheme progresses.
All of your answers will be kept confidential.
Please answer all the questions and return all of the sheets in the envelope provided. Thank you in anticipation for your valued support.

Name:
_____

Address: **Date:**
_____   _____

_____   **Tel. No.**
                                                                                   _____
Post Code: **Sport:**
_____   _____

For each of the following statements or question, place a cross in the box that best describes your feelings or opinions. There is a space provided after each question in which you may include specific comments that are relevant to the question.

Question 1.

Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to the development of sporting opportunities for children

Strongly agree   **Agree**   **Unsure**   **Disagree**   **Strongly disagree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to the development of sporting talent

Strongly agree   **Agree**   **Unsure**   **Disagree**   **Strongly disagree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to sports equity

Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comments:

Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to the amount of total physical activity in which children involved in the scheme take part

Strongly agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comments:

Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to talent identification

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comments:

Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to coach development

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comments:

Active Sports makes a valuable contribution to club development

Strongly Agree   **Agree**   **Unsure**   **Disagree**   **Strongly disagree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Active Sports will eventually increase the number of world-class athletes in this country

Strongly Agree   **Agree**   **Unsure**   **Disagree**   **Strongly disagree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Question 2.
The children find Active Sports activities an enjoyable, fun experience

All of the time   **Most of the time**   **Sometimes**   **Not often**   **Never**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

The children would take part in more activities in my sport if they were available

Strongly Agree   **Agree**   **Unsure**   **Disagree**   **Strongly disagree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Question 4.
During the activities the children appear to understand what is required of them

All of the time **Most of the time** **Sometimes** **Not often** **Never**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Question 5.

The level of performance of the participating children has improved

A great deal **Quite a lot** **Moderately** **Not much** **Not at all**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Question 6.
The children concentrate adequately during the activities

All of the time **Most of the time** **Sometimes** **Not often** **Never**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Question 7.
The keeping of accurate up to date attendance registers is an important part of the Active Sports coaching process

Strongly Agree **Agree** **Unsure** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

☐   ☐   ☐   ☐   ☐

Comments:

Question 8.

The accurate registration of all participants on the initiative is an important part of the coaching process

Strongly Agree   **Agree**   **Unsure**   **Disagree**   **Strongly disagree**

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Comments:

Question 9.
Please complete the following grid regarding the provision of educational courses.
If you agree with the statement, place a cross in the appropriate box.

The courses are:	Equity in coaching	Working with disabled sportspeople	First aid	Child protection
Too time consuming				
Run often enough				
Informative				
Of appropriate difficulty				
Well taught				
Unnecessary				

Comments:

Question 10.
I have delivered Active Sports activities

Once	2-5 Times	6-10 Times	11-15 Times	16-20 Times	>20 Times
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Thank you again for taking part in the survey.

**If you have any queries or questions that you would like to ask
regarding this survey, please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Graham Cook who is the
person responsible for monitoring and evaluating "Active Sports" in Durham on
01429 299276 (home) or 07909 685486 (mobile).**

Appendix D

Player Registration Form

Active Sports
Player Registration Form

Active Sports is a programme of local coaching, competition and development squads in 10 sports – Hockey, Netball, Rugby Union, Rugby League, Athletics, Swimming, Girl's Football, Tennis, Basketball and Cricket. We are requesting information about your child to:

- Ensure that all young people in Active Sports are as safe as possible
- Provide you with further information on opportunities available
- Track the children as they progress in their chosen sport
- Ensure that Active sports are open to all communities (equal opportunities)

It is vital that a parent/guardian signs the form prior to your child taking part in Active Sport activity.

First Name		Surname	
Address			
Post Code			
Date of birth/Age		Gender	Male ☐ Female ☐
Tel. Number (s)			
Email Address			
Sport activity to be attended			
Venue/District			
Active Sports stage			
Date Activity Starts			

Emergency Contact details: We request this information in case of emergency at an Active Sports session.	
Name of Parent/Guardian/Carer	
Emergency Contact Number	
Who is authorised to collect your child from Active Sports Sessions	

Does your child suffer from any of the following? (please tick)	Asthma		Migraine		Diabetes	
	Epilepsy		Heart problems		Skin problems	
	Fainting		Concussions		Allergies	
	Other (Please state)					
Is your child currently on medication or have any sporting injuries?	Yes ☐ No ☐		If yes please specify			
Do you consider your child to have a disability?	Yes ☐ No ☐		If yes please specify			
What is your ethnic origin? (please tick)	White ☐					
	Mixed race ☐					
	Asian or Asian British ☐					
	Black or Black British ☐					
	Chinese ☐					
	Other ☐					
Do you agree to photographs of the sessions being taken for publicity purposes? NSPCC guidelines will be adhered to	Yes ☐ No ☐					
Current School Attended					Year	
Is your child a member of a sports club? (please state)						

I confirm that consent is given for my child to attend the Active Sport activity chosen and I have read and agreed with the conditions and information below.

Signed: **Date:**

Informed Consent

Information used in this form will be used to monitor and evaluate the Active Sports programme. In addition, you or your child may be invited to provide further information regarding aspects of the scheme through short questionnaires and / or interview. All information will remain confidential and be held on computer or in locked cabinets. No reference to individuals will be made in verbal or written reports. You or your child's participation in this study is voluntary and you may decline to take part at any time. I have read and understood this information and agree for myself or my child to participate further in this study if so requested.

Data Protection Act 1988

All information supplied by you in connection with this application, both now and in the future, will be processed in confidence by the Durham Sport Partnership for the purposes stated in the introduction. However, in order to better assess your needs and the accuracy of the information supplied, we may share this with other bodies, in particular Sport England and the National Governing Body of the relevant sport. If you have any queries about the processing of your data, please contact Durham Sport on 0191 301 8416.

Appendix E

Coach Registration Form

Active Sports
Coach Registration Form

Active Sports is a programme of local coaching, competition and development squads in 10 sports – Hockey, Netball, Rugby Union, Rugby League, Athletics, Swimming, Girl's Football, Tennis, Basketball and Cricket. We are requesting information about you in order to:

- Ensure that all young people in Active Sports are as safe as possible
- Provide you with further information on opportunities available
- Track your development as a coach
- Ensure that Active sports are open to all communities (equal opportunities)

It is vital that you complete and sign the form prior to you taking part in Active Sport activity.

First Name		Surname	
Address			
Post Code			
Date of birth/Age		Gender	Male ☐ Female ☐
Tel. Number (s)			
Email Address			
Sport(s) coached			
Qualifications			
Experience			

Emergency Contact details: We request this information in case of emergency at an Active Sports session.	
Name of contact	
Emergency Contact Number	

Do you suffer from any of these conditions (please tick)	Asthma		Migraine	Diabetes
	Epilepsy		Heart problems	Skin problems
	Fainting		Concussions	Allergies
	Other (Please state)			
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?	Yes ☐ No ☐		If yes please specify	
What is your ethnic origin? (please tick)	White		☐	
	Mixed race		☐	
	Asian or Asian British		☐	
	Black or Black British		☐	
	Chinese		☐	
	Other		☐	
Do you have a current CRB check?				
Do you have coaching insurance?				

I confirm that I have read and agreed with the conditions and information below.

Signed: **Date:**

Informed Consent

Information used in this form will be used to monitor and evaluate the Active Sports programme. In addition, you may be invited to provide further information regarding aspects of the scheme through short questionnaires and / or interview. All information will remain confidential and be held on computer or in locked cabinets. No reference to individuals will be made in verbal or written reports. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may decline to take part at any time. I have read and understood this information and agree to participate further in this study if so requested.

Data Protection Act 1988

All information supplied by you in connection with this application, both now and in the future, will be processed in confidence by the Durham Sport Partnership for the purposes stated in the introduction. However, in order to better assess your needs and the accuracy of the information supplied, we may share this with other bodies, in particular Sport England and the National Governing Body of the relevant sport. If you have any queries about the processing of your data, please contact Durham Sport on 0191 301 8416.

Appendix F

Participant Interview

Active Sports

Participant Interview

Name:

Age:

Address:

Sport:

Date:

1. What do you think of when someone talks about sport?

2. Who is your favourite player in the Active Sport you play?

3. Why?

4. What is your favourite sport?

5. Why?

6. Who is your favourite sportsperson (all sports)?

7. Why?

8. Do or did either of your parents play sport?

9. If yes, which parent?

9a. If yes, what sport?

10. If yes, what level?

11. Do your parents encourage you to play sport?

12. If yes, how do they do this?

13. Do you take part in any sports with your parents?

14. If yes, which parent and what sport?

14a. If yes, what sport?

14b. If yes, what level?

14c. If yes, where?

14d. If yes, when?

15. Do you play sport in school time?

16. If yes, which sports and at what level? E.g. intra school, inter school

17. Do you go to any after school sports clubs?

18. If yes, which sports?

19. What do you do most frequently in your spare time?

20. Do you play sport with friends in your spare time?

21. If yes, which sport is played most often?

22. Why do you play sport? (State options and circle positive answers)

FOR FUN   TO KEEP FIT   TO BECOME BETTER AT IT

BECAUSE MY FRIENDS DO   BECAUSE I LIKE WINNING

BECAUSE I WANT TO BE A PROFESSIONAL

ANY OTHER REASON –

23. On a scale of 1-10, how physically fit would you say you are? (1= unfit, 10= very fit)

24. On a scale of 1-10, how good are you at this sport compared to others of your own age?

25. How do you get to and from school?

26. How long does it take you to get to school?

27. Do you know what Active Sports is?

28. Who told you about Active Sports?

29. Do any of your friends not take part in Active Sports even though they want to?

30. If yes, what is the reason?

31. Are there any ways in which the Active Sports coaching sessions could be improved?

Appendix G

Coach Interview

Active Sports
Coach Interview

Name:

Address

Sport

Date:

Q1 – What is Active Sports?

Q2 – Why did you become an Active Sports coach?

Q3 – Do you feel that you have improved as a coach as a result of Active Sports involvement and if so, in what way?

Q4 – Do you coach more because of Active Sports involvement?

Q5 – Does the requirement to attend educational courses help or hinder?

Q6 – What strategies do you use to meet Active Sports equity targets?

Q7 – Do you think that equity targets help or hinder the initiative?

Q8 – How do you rate the support you receive from Durham Sport?

Q9 - On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate the physical fitness of the participants?

Q10 - Why do you think the children participate?

Q11 - Have you identified any potential world class performers?

Q12 - What suggestions do you have to improve the initiative?