Policy stability in a time of turbulence: the case of elite sport policy in England/the UK

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.

Additional Information:

- A Doctoral Thesis. Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University.

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/16219

Publisher: © Pippa Chapman

Rights: This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Please cite the published version.
Policy stability in a time of turbulence: the case of elite sport policy in England/the UK

By Pippa Chapman

Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of Loughborough University
August 2014

© Pippa Chapman 2014
Abstract

The research analyses stability and change in the English/British elite sport policy landscape in the period 2005 to early 2014. In the context of a recession and change of government, the policy environment could be described as turbulent and cuts to public funding and commitment to deregulation have been key features of the overarching policy landscape. There was an assumption that elite sport would not be immune from the policy turbulence. The policy landscape is described as consisting of three elements: organisations, public funding and political salience. The original contribution of the thesis is threefold: first, in relation to the empirical study of the relative impact of the political and economic turbulence on the elite sport system; second, in the application of institutional theory and punctuated equilibrium theory to the analysis of elite sport policy; and third, the application of theory to explain the extent of stability uncovered through the empirical research.

The research used a case study approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 senior officials from sport in England/the UK from both sport-specific NGBs and organisations with wider, national remits for elite sport and incorporating both government and non-government organisations. Due to the sample of interviewees, the nuances of elite interviewing were an important consideration for the researcher. A document analysis study was also carried out. Through the existing literature and the data gathered, three cases emerged and were examined in depth: youth talent search and development; nurturing and transferring talent; and sustaining world class athletes. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data.

The data revealed that the policy landscape was, for the most part, stable in the period studied. There were changes to the intensity of financial and political support and refinements of policy objectives, especially due to the hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, but the overall policy aims remained consistent. The reasons identified for this stability were as follows: the absence of an alternative, critical lobby; strong leadership in the sector; and the hosting of the London 2012 Games. The long-term impact of Labour’s Modernisation agenda was found to have contributed to the stable governance of elite sport, which includes a structure for decision-making and accountability around funding of NGBs by UK Sport. Historical Institutionalism was found to offer the most useful meso-level framework for analysis of the data and clear critical junctures and path formation phases could be identified.

Key words: elite sport, policy, NGBs, historical institutionalism, modernisation, London 2012
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Barrie Houlihan for his guidance, wisdom and patience during my research. I feel indebted to Barrie for giving me this opportunity and supporting me for the past three years. I would also like to thank Prof. Richard Giulianotti for his advice at my annual review meetings. The research community at Loughborough University has been invaluable so thank you also to the staff and my fellow students in the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences and the Liquid Lab. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Chris Earle, the former Director of Sport at Loughborough University, who offered guidance on the overall direction of the research and gave significant assistance in contacting some of the interviewees.

I was fortunate to have access to interviewees who gave their time willingly and engaged fully in the interviews, which allowed me to gather rich data. Without them the research would not have been possible. I have done my utmost to represent their views accurately and protect their anonymity.

My wonderful family and lovely friends have been incredibly supportive of me throughout my studies and have been kind enough to listen to me droning on about my work so I thank them for their love and patience. In particular I would like to thank Mum and Livvy for inspiring me and giving me extra little nudges and words of encouragement to pursue this path and work hard.

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, Jamie. He has been behind me every step of the way and kept me going when throwing in the towel seemed like the most appealing option. Thank you for giving me a push when I needed it, for giving me the space and time to work when inspiration took hold and for proof reading (I promise you will not have to read about Foucault again!) and being a sounding board for me.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ 2
Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................... 3
List of Figures .............................................................................................................................. 6
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................... 7

Chapter 1 – Introduction .......................................................................................................... 8
  1.1 Aim and objectives of the research .................................................................................. 8
  1.2 Policy turbulence in the UK ............................................................................................ 9
  1.3 Sport policy context: The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games .................. 15
  1.4 Structure of the thesis ..................................................................................................... 17

Chapter 2 – Historical Context ............................................................................................ 20
  2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 20
  2.2 Increasing government interest in sport ....................................................................... 21
  2.3 The prominence of elite sport in government policy .................................................. 28
  2.4 The role of the Sports Councils .................................................................................... 30
  2.5 Funding ......................................................................................................................... 35
  2.6 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 39

Chapter 3 – Literature Review ............................................................................................ 41
  3.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 41
  3.2 Policy ............................................................................................................................ 43
  3.3 Power ............................................................................................................................ 48
  3.4 Macro-level theories .................................................................................................... 52
  3.5 Stability and change ..................................................................................................... 54
  3.6 Meso-level theories ..................................................................................................... 54
    3.6.1 The Advocacy Coalition Framework .................................................................... 55
    3.6.2 Punctuated Equilibrium theory .......................................................................... 59
    3.6.3 The Multiple Streams Framework ..................................................................... 61
    3.6.4 New Institutionalism .......................................................................................... 64
  3.7 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 68

Chapter 4 – Methodology .................................................................................................... 71
  4.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 71
  4.2 Ontology ...................................................................................................................... 72
  4.3 Epistemology ............................................................................................................... 72
  4.4 Paradigms ..................................................................................................................... 73
    4.4.1 Critical Realism ................................................................................................... 76
  4.5 Research design ............................................................................................................ 78
    4.5.1 Case studies ......................................................................................................... 79
  4.6 Approaches to data collection ..................................................................................... 81
    4.6.1 Quantitative methods .......................................................................................... 81
    4.6.2 Qualitative methods ........................................................................................... 82
    4.6.3 Mixed methods .................................................................................................... 83
  4.7 Methods for data collection and analysis .................................................................. 83
    4.7.1 Interviews ............................................................................................................ 84
    4.7.2 Sampling for interviews ..................................................................................... 87
    4.7.3 Elite Interviewing ................................................................................................ 89
    4.7.4 Document Analysis ............................................................................................ 91
    4.7.5 Sampling for document analysis ....................................................................... 94
    4.7.6 Analysing the Data – Thematic Analysis ............................................................ 95
  4.8 Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research ....................................................... 97
  4.9 Summary ...................................................................................................................... 98

Chapter 5 – The Elite Sport Landscape ............................................................................. 100
  5.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................ 100
  5.2 The government and its agencies ............................................................................. 103
    5.2.1 Policy priorities .................................................................................................. 104
    5.2.2 Finance .............................................................................................................. 109
List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>National Lottery total funding to good causes 1995 – 2014</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The classical model of path dependency</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Continuum of paradigms</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Research timeline</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>England Talent Pathway for Basketball</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>England Talent Pathway for Taekwondo</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>The pyramid model of sport development</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>The Long Term Athlete Development model</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>British Cycling Olympic development programmes</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>GB Badminton Player PerformancePathway</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### List of Tables

1.1 Spending review 2010 Departmental Programme and Administration Budgets (Resource DEL excluding depreciation) – selected departments  
12

2.1 The Great Britain and Northern Ireland team’s medal table position and medal totals at the Olympic Games 1996-2008  
35

2.2 Sports Council funding to NGBs for ‘Preparation training’ 1976-1985  
36

3.1 Key features, criticisms and implications for sport policymaking of five macro-level theories  
49

3.2 Criteria for selecting appropriate meso-level frameworks for policy analysis.  
54

4.1 Description of three types of case study  
80

5.1 Funding for Olympic and Paralympic sport WCPP 2000-2016  
110

6.1 Details of the Commonwealth Youth Games 2000-2011  
131

6.2 Levels of competition in the School Games  
136

6.3 Roles and responsibilities of key partners for School Games management and delivery  
137

6.4 Key elements of an effective England Talent Pathway  
143

7.1 Peak ages of competitors in five sports  
158

7.2 Podium Potential levels within the British Athletics Performance Matrix  
164

7.3 Talent transfer programmes managed by UK Sport 2007-2013  
170

8.1 Funding for Olympic and Paralympic sport WCPP 2000-2016  
194

8.2 Funding amounts for Olympic sports for the London and Rio funding cycles  
196

8.3 Funding amounts for Paralympic sports for the London and Rio funding cycles  
197

8.4 Funding to UK Sport from Exchequer and National Lottery 2009/10-2012/13  
198

8.5 UK Sport income sources 2009-2013 and 2013-2017  
198

8.6 Sport England funding for England elite programmes 2013-2017  
199

9.1 Three levels of change within the three case studies (2005 – 2014)  
214

9.2 Funding allocations for selected sports 2000-2016  
220

9.3 Phases of path dependency in British elite sport policy 1997-2014  
233
Chapter 1 – Introduction

This chapter presents the aims and objectives of the research and introduces key contextual concerns for the research. There is an explanation of some of the central policies of the Coalition government and an exploration of recent policy turbulence including specific examples from the policy sub-sectors of education and health. There is also a brief overview of recent sport policy, including the successful London 2012 bid, which will be expanded further in the following chapter. Finally there is an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Aim and objectives of the research

The aim and objectives of this research are as follows:

Aim:
An analysis of public policy stability and change in the landscape of England/UK\(^{12}\) elite sport since 2005

Objectives:
1. To identify the key elements of the elite sport policy landscape
2. To trace the emergence of talent identification and development and elite sport success as priorities of sport policy
3. To identify the impact on the elite sport policy landscape of the financial crisis, which began in 2008 and the change of government in 2010

The research project was initiated by the research supervisor and other interested parties within Loughborough University. The interest in this topic came about for two main reasons: firstly, an academic interest in the unusual policy context brought about by the financial crisis and the change in government in 2010 and the potential impact upon sport policy in general and the position of Loughborough University within the landscape in particular. At first the intention was to examine the sport policy landscape as a whole, including elements such as community based sport, but

---

\(^{1}\) The focus of the thesis is predominantly on the UK level but also examines the policy landscape in England where relevant. There is a clear role for the other home countries, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the policy landscape but the policy landscape in these nations are not explored in depth. Devolution is explained in chapter 2 and explored further in the empirical chapters (chapters 5 to 8) in order to examine the impact of this overarching policy on elite sport.

\(^{2}\) The terms ‘UK’, ‘Great Britain’ and ‘British’ appear regularly within the thesis. Where there is reference to the country, UK will be used. When used by an organisation, such as UK Sport, British Cycling or Team GB, the appropriate term will be selected.
it was later decided that this would be too broad a scope for the research and that the main interest of the university for this research was elite sport so the research aim and objectives were revised. It was expected that the policy turbulence within the UK caused by the financial crisis and the establishment of the Coalition government would result in changes within the sport policy landscape as it has done in other policy sub-sectors.

1.2 Policy turbulence in the UK

The financial crisis began in earnest in 2008 although early indications of the crisis were evident in problems at IKB Deutsche Industriebank in Germany and Northern Rock in the UK in 2007, both of which required government bailouts. The collapse of investment bank Lehman Brothers and the bailout of the insurance company American International Group (AIG) in the USA in 2008 were seen as more significant factors as the destabilising effects of these two crises in the USA impacted upon other countries (Hodson and Quaglia, 2009). A review of the British government’s response to the crisis stated that the collapse of Northern Rock was initially assumed to be an isolated problem but “By autumn 2008, it had become clear that the impact would be much wider” (HM Treasury, 2012: 22). The financial crisis led to significant economic problems including increased unemployment and decreased amounts of exports, which fell by 15% in the final quarter of 2008 and then fell again in the final quarter of 2009 (Vis, van Kersbergen and Hylands, 2011). The UK economy entered recession in the third quarter of 2008 and at the height of the recession GDP fell by 2.6% in one quarter (House of Commons Library, 2010). There were initial cuts to some government spending in 2009 as a result of the financial crisis, which included cuts to elite sport. Sports whose funding allocation was reduced were encouraged to find alternative funding streams but as Kessel (2009) noted, the economic climate made this very difficult.

Following the General Election in 2010, no party won an outright majority in Parliament and a Coalition government was formed between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats and led by the Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, with the Liberal Democrats leader, Nick Clegg, in the role of Deputy Prime Minister. As well as the government swinging from a Labour government to a Conservative-led Coalition, the UK was in a recession at the time following the global economic crisis that began in 2008. The combination of the financial context and the
change of government led to a period of significant change within government and across public policy areas including welfare, education and health.

The new government’s first publication was The Coalition: our programme for government (HM Government, 2010), which presented key policy directions for the Coalition government and had a jointly written foreword by the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. Recovery from the financial crisis was described as “the most urgent issue facing Britain” (HM Government, 2010: 15). There was an ideological element that guided the Coalition’s plans, in addition to the need to cut public spending, which was the aim to reduce the size of government and give more autonomy to local people and groups. It was stated: “the days of big government are over; that centralisation and top-down control have proved a failure” (HM Government, 2010: 7). In their pre-election manifesto, the Conservative Party outlined their idea for “Big society, not big government” (The Conservative Party, 2010: 36) with a greater emphasis on local action to respond to local issues and relinquishing power and control from central government, themes that were then adopted by the Coalition government.

Many of the changes focused on reducing levels of public spending so there were cuts to the funding of government departments both in terms of the structure and staffing of the departments and funding to the policies and programmes. A Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) was carried out following the establishment of the Coalition government in 2010. The government stated that funding cuts were, “an urgent priority to secure economic stability at a time of continuing uncertainty in the global economy and put Britain’s public services and welfare system on a sustainable long term footing” (HM Treasury, 2010: 5).

Budgets outlined in the CSR are divided in to two sets of spending – the Department Expenditure Limits (DEL), the amount that government departments have to spend each year on their administration and programmes, and the Annual Managed Expenditure (AME), less predictable costs that are based on demand and include elements such as welfare and pension contributions. Taylor-Gooby and Stoker (2011) highlighted that cuts to departmental budgets are more significant for cutting the public spending deficit than the changes to taxation and to the benefits system. In the 2010 CSR, the government outlined plans to reduce the welfare AME by £7billion by the 2014/2015 financial year by simplifying the system and cutting certain welfare benefit payments (HM Treasury, 2010).
As shown in Table 1.1, the government aimed to make an 8.3% saving in government DEL spending in the period 2010/11 to 2014/15. This table clearly shows the huge difference in programme budgets for different government departments: the Department of Health has the largest DEL budget with a baseline of £98.7 billion, and is also one of the few government departments not to have its budget cut over the spending periods covered in the CSR, while departments such as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for Energy and Climate Change and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) have budgets closer to £1 billion per year.

Taylor-Gooby and Stoker (2011: 4) described the Coalition’s programmes to cut public spending as “cumulative, abrupt and substantial” and highlighted the restructuring and deregulation that impact upon local government, health services, education and welfare programmes. Taylor-Gooby and Stoker (2011: 14) stated that the policy change for public services “takes the country in a new direction, rolling back the state.” Both Taylor-Gooby and Stoker (2011) and Hills (2011) stated that the changes to the structure and funding of public services are making the UK system more akin to the approach of state non-intervention in USA.
One of the key objectives for the government in reducing public spending and the size of the government was to reduce the number of Arms Length Bodies (ALBs), also known as non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) quangos. In the Conservative Party’s pre-election manifesto, there was clear criticism on the use of such organisations within the government and an intention to drastically reduce the number of ALBs. It was stated that such organisations were expensive and undermined confidence in the government (The Conservative Party, 2010). This view was further reflected in the Coalition’s plans for the government as a policy that would contribute to reducing government spending (HM Government, 2010) and later in the CSR (HM Treasury, 2010). The plans to reduce the number of ALBs were outlined in the CSR: “the number of ALBs across Government will be radically reduced. 118 will be merged and a further 192 will cease to be public bodies with their functions either being brought back into Government, devolved or abolished” (HM Treasury, 2010: 38) and that this would contribute to a saving of £5.9billion per year by 2014-2015. Within the DCMS, there were 19 ALBs that were earmarked to be abolished or reformed, including UK Sport and Sport England, for which a merger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Baseline 2010-11</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>2014-15</th>
<th>Per cent cumulative real growth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>-3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS (Health)</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>101.5</td>
<td>104.0</td>
<td>106.9</td>
<td>109.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLG Communities</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLG Local government</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>-7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign and Commonwealth Office</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Development</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, Media and Sport</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>-24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and Pensions</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>-6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>-7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>-6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM Revenue and Customs</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>-15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM Treasury</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>-33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Office</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (all departments)</strong></td>
<td><strong>325.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>326.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>326.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>330.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>328.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>-8.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HM Treasury (2010: 10)
was planned (HM Treasury, 2010). Both the economic crisis and change of government impacted upon government departments in different ways, including education and health, which will be explored further below.

Education

The shift in political ideology has also resulted in significant changes to specific areas of public policy, with a particular focus on deregulation. The result of this approach by the government has led to the termination of NDPBs, as noted above, and also the development of new approaches to the implementation of policy. Education is one area of public policy where there has been significant change: the government’s approach has focussed on improving standards in education through deregulation and a focus on local decision-making. Specific policies that are illustrative of this approach have been the introduction of free schools and academies. These policies have been implemented following the passing of acts of government, The Academies Act 2010 and The Education Act 2011. By way of a rationale for academies and free schools the government stated:

“There is evidence that giving heads and teachers greater freedom over their curriculum, budget and staff can help improve the quality of the education they provide and reduce the attainment gap.” (Department of Education, 2013 online)

Academies are converted from existing schools and continue to be publicly funded but are independent from their local authority so the school has more freedom over its budgeting and the government encourages academies with good academic records to work with weaker academies to help them to raise standards (Department of Education, 2013). Some academies are established due to intervention by the government, usually due to a poor Ofsted report, whereas others are converted voluntarily by the school. Free Schools are newly established schools set up by a consortium of local interested parties in response to local needs. They are independent, non-profit, non-selective schools. In an online publication dated 22 April 2013, it was stated that 80 free schools had been established in England (Department of Education, 2013). This radial change in approach to developing and establishing schools indicates an ideological influence from the Conservative Party with less local government influence, less central government regulation, development of marketization in the sector as schools have greater control over their
budgets and the establishment of new independent organisations to guide and fund schools. Avis (2011: 434) highlighted a key difference between the Coalition government and the preceding Labour government in their approaches to education policy: “one [is] seeking to roll back the state and re-order welfare and the other [was] committed to state intervention.”

Wright (2012) described the Coalition’s education policies as seeking to empower citizens by giving them power over the sector that is usually reserved for the government but he described this empowerment as a ‘fantasy’. One example of Wright’s critique is with regards to teachers: under the Coalition’s policies for schools, teachers have greater control over local decisions but they are also subject to greater scrutiny by the consumers in the marketplace, which in this case are parents of pupils in the school therefore teachers have to accept “their subordination to the market” (Wright, 2012: 291) so the empowerment rests more with the consumer, parents, than the service providers, teachers.

Health

The Department of Health (DH) was one of the departments to have its funding increased in the 2010 CSR. The Coalition government’s commitment to deregulation is evident in its policies for health: the CSR settlement for the DH stated, “The Department will abolish Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities by 2013, removing whole tiers of NHS management, saving money and empowering frontline professionals.” (HM Treasury, 2010: 43). Changes to the National Health Service (NHS) were outlined in the government’s document, Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS (DH, 2010) and it was stated in the foreword that one of the aims of the changes to the NHS was “to once again make the NHS the envy of the world” (DH, 2011: 1). Responsibilities and budgets for some elements of the health service were transferred to groups of GPs and local authorities so there was a clear focus on local control of health provision (DH, 2010). Hills (2011) was critical of the decision to devolve powers on decision-making and budget control to GPs because this means that public money will be used to pay for private services with the decisions made by private employees, noting that GPs are not public employees.

Roland and Rosen (2011) highlighted some of the key changes to the NHS planned by the Coalition government including transferral of 70% of the NHS budget being transferred to groups of general practitioners (GPs) and other responsibilities being
transferred to local authorities so there is a greater emphasis on local control of services and also a new emphasis on provision of services for hospitals being provided by the private sector. These changes are in line with the Coalition government’s general objectives around deregulation and greater local ownership, thus shrinking central government, and prioritisation of market interests through engaging the private sector in a traditionally public service. Roland and Rosen (2011: 1366) stated, “The initiatives proposed for the English health system herald an immense change” and that the changes would not reap benefits for 3-4 years.

While many areas of government activity expected turbulence due to the Coalition’s commitment to deregulation, as described in the examples above, others were affected by substantial cuts to department budgets, such as the Department for Transport and the Department for Communities and Local Government. Given these examples, it was assumed that sport would not be immune to change: there was a significant reduction in the budget for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and a merger of Sport England and UK Sport was proposed. It was also, therefore, assumed that elite sport would experience turbulence due to reduced funding and a change to the organisational structure of sport.

1.3 Sport policy context: The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

In addition to the key events of the financial crisis and the election of the Coalition government, an additional factor that has been an important part of UK sport policy discourse for the past 10-15 years has been the hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The process of bidding for the 2012 Games was preceded by failed bids to host the Games in Birmingham in 1992 and in Manchester in 1996 and 2000. There was a feasibility study carried out for a future London Games that began in 1997 after it became clear following the second failed Manchester bid that only a London bid would be likely to be successful (Masterman, 2013).

The bid was won on 6 July 2005 during the IOC session in Singapore and Masterman (2013) identified six key factors in the success of the bid:

1. The bid team, which was initially led by Barbara Cassani and later by Lord Sebastian Coe and included political figures, the former Chair of the British Olympic Association (BOA) and businessman Keith Mills.
2. Communications, in particular garnering public support at home and portraying the city well to an international audience

3. The vision, which was focused on inspiring young people both in the UK and around the world, which was highlighted by Masterman as particularly important as it appealed to stakeholders’ concerns over their future audiences and markets

4. Lobbying and understanding attitudes towards the London bid and responding to these. Masterman highlighted the decision by the London bid team to arrive in Singapore early to prepare for the presentation and meet with IOC members when they arrived

5. The presentation, which focused on the vision for young people, an approach that had not been used before in a bid presentation

6. The role of specific individuals, in particular the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, who attended the event and participated in the lobbying process, and Lord Sebastian Coe.

There was clear government commitment to the bid, although there were concerns about the cost and over the course of the preparations for the Games the budget swelled from initial estimates of £1.8billion and £2.4billion (Masterman, 2013) to a budget of £9.3billion in 2010 (HM Treasury, 2010).

By the time the Coalition government was established in 2010, the preparations for the London 2012 Games were well underway. In spite of the financial crisis, the government maintained the commitment to the Games shown by the preceding government, including maintaining the commitment of public funding in order to stage the Games. There were specific comments made about the Games in the description of the funding review settlement for the DCMS: “As 2012 approaches, the nature of the Olympic programme will change, requiring swifter responses to remaining challenges. To facilitate this, the Spending Review announces that DCMS will become sole budget holder for central government spending on the Olympics” (HM Treasury, 2010: 66).

After the bid was won in 2005 sport policy was shaped by elements of the bid as the government wanted to achieve a legacy from the hosting of the Games. There were significant developments in infrastructure required in order to host the Games including a full regeneration of part of east London and the building of new facilities including an aquatics centre, velodrome and main Olympic stadium. A further legacy
that the government sought was to influence people’s participation in sport and to increase the number of people regularly engaging in sport across the country. The hosting of London 2012 also shaped elite sport policy as the government invested more money in to the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP), which is managed by UK Sport. The government set an ambitious target of coming fourth in the medals table at the Olympic Games in 2012 having been 36th at Atlanta 1996 then 10th at both Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004.

The hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games combined with turbulent policy context of a change in government and a global financial crisis presents an unusual policy environment for sport that has not previously been experienced in the UK. While research on other policy sub-sectors focuses on the two macro-level changes to the political environment, the elite sport policy landscape is further impacted upon, and potentially complicated by, the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in the midst of policy turbulence. This research seeks to explore stability and change in the elite sport policy landscape in light of this unusual policy context.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of three theory chapters and four chapters presenting empirical data followed by a concluding chapter. Chapter 2, Historical Context, focuses on the historical context of elite sport policy in the UK in order to provide background to the empirical work and alert the reader to the pattern of previous decisions, which provide the context for, and potential constraints upon, recent policymaking. This chapter also identifies the key elements of the elite sport policy landscape that have emerged, namely organisations, programmes and partnerships; funding; and political salience.

Chapter 3, Literature Review, is a review of the literature on policy theory. In this chapter, key concepts including policy, power, and change are explored along with a range of macro- and meso-level theories and frameworks. A selection of meso-level analytical frameworks is evaluated for their potential to be used in this research. The literature that is explored in this chapter, in particular theories of power, the nature of stability and change in policymaking and meso-level theories, was deemed appropriate due to the nature of the historical context that had been explored in Chapter 2.
Chapter 4, *Methodology*, outlines the philosophical underpinnings of the research and the methods used for data collection, which are document analysis and semi-structured interviews, and analysis. Due to the nature of the sample for the interviews, which included senior officials from key organisations in the landscape, the nuances of elite interviewing were explored.

Chapter 5, *The Elite Sport Landscape*, is the first of the empirical chapters presents the current context of the elite sport policy landscape and overarching themes, including the relationships between key organisations within the landscape. Chapter 5 introduces the empirical data by examining crosscutting themes including descriptions of the key stakeholder groups in the landscape and their relationships with other organisations and the effects of the Labour government’s modernisation agenda. The themes explored in this chapter are applicable to all three of the case studies that follow.

Chapter 6, *Youth Talent Search and Development*, is the first of the three case studies. This case study explores the expansion of international competition for young elite athletes and the response within the UK system as well as the significance of domestic competition for young people. There is also an examination the shift of location for policies for youth talent identification from being school-based under the Labour government to being club-based under the Coalition government.

Chapter 7, *Nurturing and Transferring Talent*, explores the development and transfer of talent within elite sport including the challenge presented by sport policy being a devolved responsibility in the UK. Systematic talent transfer programmes represent a key innovation in this area and have been adopted by UK Sport, focusing on a number of sports that the organisation supports, and some NGBs.

Chapter 8, *Sustaining World Class Athletes*, focuses on policies around the funding of elite sport programmes in the UK and in particular the role of UK Sport’s ‘No Compromise’ approach to decision-making and funding for elite sport. This was found to be the most stable area of policy within the landscape as it retains both high levels of funding and significant political interest from successive governments.

Chapter 9, the final chapter, draws conclusions from the empirical data and evaluates the research process. As well as summarising the key findings of the
research, there is an evaluation of the theories employed for data analysis. A crucial element in the richness of the data that was obtained was the researcher’s ability to access high level interviewees and therefore the data could be described as both reliable and valid and can be seen as making a valuable contribution to the sport policy literature.
Chapter 2 – Historical Context

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the development of sport policy in the UK up to 2010 in order to give the historical context for the empirical study. It is important to understand the context because even though elite sport policy is a rapidly developing field, the roots of contemporary issues often lie in past decisions and long-established cultural norms. Furthermore, current policy decisions can be shaped, and even constrained, by previous decisions. This chapter will explore significant developments in the sport landscape and national sport policy.

There are four key sections within this chapter that each outlines a significant development within national sport policy in the UK. The first development is the growth in the government’s interest in sport and its adoption of sport as a concern for central government whereas it had previously been controlled at the local level, predominantly through the provision and management of leisure facilities by local government. This section will examine how the government began to consider its role in making policy for sport in the 1960s and the gradual movement of sport into being a more central concern of government with the creation of a Ministerial post for sport, how sport was managed within different departments and the direct involvement of senior ministers, including Prime Ministers John Major and Tony Blair, in sport policy.

This second development to be examined is the emergence and prioritisation of elite sport by the government and how this has been articulated through government policy documents and the reasons given by government for pursuing this policy priority. The international sports context is cited as a reason for this development.

The third key development was the establishment and subsequent evolution of the sports councils. These organisations have been integral to the structure and governance of sport and to the creation of a system for developing elite sport. The government initially resisted the establishment of an executive sports council to take on responsibility for coordinating sports provision. The executive sports council was established in 1972 and, along with the government, took a growing interest in supporting the development of elite sport. The Sports Council was split in the 1990s with one organisation taking responsibility for sports participation in England and the other taking responsibility for elite sport across the UK. The establishment of a
national organisation with specific responsibility for elite sport indicated how important this area of sports policy had become and continues to be.

The fourth development to be examined is the funding of sport. As the interest of the government and the sports council increased in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s so did the public funding dedicated to supporting elite athletes. The greatest change to the funding of elite sport has come about with the introduction of the National Lottery in 1994 and the beginning of funding allocations to elite sport from 1997. The money from the National Lottery and the government exchequer for elite sport increased steadily over the first ten years that it was available but there was a step change when London won the bid for hosting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the political imperative of British success increased.

2.2 Increasing government interest in sport

Talbot (1995: 3) described the view of the government in the 1960s in relation to sport and physical education as being that "sport and physical education were a matter of individual choice and therefore not a proper area for government involvement". While this viewpoint did change, Houlihan (1997: 93) described the British government’s approach to sport policy as “piecemeal and reactive” until the 1960s. It was at this point that the government acknowledged sport as a policy concern and since then its prominence has grown and become consolidated.

Coghlan (1990) provided an account of the growth of sport in the UK in the twentieth century and this account explains a volunteer-led situation that featured divisions according to class, an emphasis on the importance of experiences in school through physical education and a widening definition of the term “sport”. Coghlan (1990: 6) pointed to the significance of the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR), a voluntary body, as important at this time and an organisation that the national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) looked to for “collective cooperation” in order to further their development. A key initiative of the CCPR was the establishment of the National Recreation Centres/National Sports Centres, which Coghlan described as “a most imaginative and courageous policy” (1990: 7). While the CCPR was a voluntary organisation, it had a political and financial relationship with the government: it
received financial support from the government via the Ministry of Education and, as Houlihan (1991) described, it was aligned with the government's youth policy.

Coghlan (1990) and Houlihan (1991) both cited a growing concern around a lack of government policy and direction for sport as being the prompt for the CCPR to commission an enquiry into the development of sport in the UK and to be conducted by a committee led by Sir John Wolfenden. Houlihan (1991: 87) described the subsequent report published in 1960 as “a watershed in the development of sport policy”. Houlihan (1991) also highlighted a growth in concern for British success in international competition during the 1950s and 1960s as performances had declined and there was a growth in the intensity of international competition, particularly from East Germany and the Soviet Union.

The Wolfenden Report was debated in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords but Coghlan (1990: 12) described these debates as “disappointing if one was looking for commitment and action”. In 1962, Lord Halisham, who was a Cabinet Minister, had his portfolio expanded to include being 'Minister with responsibility for sport', a decision that was described by Coghlan (1990) as significant, because this gave sport a voice in government and the Cabinet. However this was tempered by the fact that Lord Halisham did not agree with the establishment of a Sports Development Council, one of the key recommendations of the Wolfenden report, and that, at this point, the government's intention was merely to endorse the importance of sport but not commit public resources. The Wolfenden report also acknowledged the potential for international success to support the UK’s international relations (Houlihan, 1991).

The decision to have sport as a specific ministerial responsibility was continued by the Labour government that had been voted into power in 1964 and Denis Howell was given this responsibility. The position was later elevated to the rank of Minister of State, thus giving the Minister greater power and the portfolio greater prominence (Coghlan, 1990). However, Houlihan (1997: 46) stated that there was “uncertainty about status and location within the machinery of government”. The location of the Minister within a government department was rarely stable until the 1990s, with its location over the years including within Ministries or Departments responsible for Education, Housing and Local Government and the Environment (Coghlan, 1990; Houlihan, 1997).
A clear shift in the way in which the government perceived sport, as well as its own role in sport, could be seen with the publication of *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995), the first government policy document about sport since the publication of the White Paper *Sport and Recreation* by the Department of the Environment (DOE) in 1975. Ahead of this publication, the Department of National Heritage (DNH) was established under Prime Minister John Major in 1992 and sport was part of the department’s portfolio. Houlihan (1997), Houlihan and White (2002) and Bloyce and Smith (2010) all acknowledge that this development contributed to a clearer way forward for sport policy. The establishment of the DNH provided three significant developments for sport policy: firstly, it gave sport a stronger voice in the Cabinet. Secondly, it established a central point of responsibility within the government, creating a hub for other areas of government with sport in their remit (Houlihan, 1997). Thirdly, and arguably more importantly, it acknowledged that international elite sport success was of interest to government and an issue about which government should have a policy. As Green (2007: 937) noted, sport “was now considered a discrete domain for government intervention”. The administrative structure that was put in place made a significant contribution to the development of sport to establish, as Houlihan (1997: 99) stated, a “more secure central government administrative framework”. However, Houlihan (1997) went on to caution that policy coordination continued to be as issue, despite this development. When the Labour government won the general election in 1997, this department was re-branded as the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – as Green (2007) noted, this is the first time that a government department’s title included the word “sport”. The remit of the department has remained relatively unchanged to the present day, despite the change of government in 2010, and the most significant change being taking on the remit of the central government’s responsibilities for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games after London’s successful bid in 2005.

The involvement of Prime Ministers in sport can be seen as indicative of an increase in the government interest in sport: most notably with regards to Prime Ministers John Major and Tony Blair. Major’s interest in sport is viewed by many as marking a change in the way that sport was perceived and supported by government (Houlihan, 1997; Robson, 2001; Houlihan and White, 2002; Green, 2009; Bloyce and Smith, 2010; McDonald, 2011). Bloyce and Smith (2010:45) noted that “the political salience of sport increased substantially” upon John Major’s appointment, and Houlihan (1997: 96) noted that the establishment of the DNH “reflected the personal commitment to sport by Prime Minister Major”. Major’s interest can also be seen in
Sport: Raising the Game (DNH, 1995), which included an introduction from the Prime Minister. In addition, Major’s government was responsible for the establishment of the National Lottery, which became a significant funder for sport in the UK and gave the government considerable leverage with non-government partners in sport, namely the NGBs.

When the Labour government, led by Prime Minister Tony Blair, was voted to power in 1997 there was a strong degree of policy continuity from the previous government, manifested in the new government’s first policy document for sport, A Sporting Future for All (DCMS, 2000), which carried many of the same policy priorities (Green, 2004; Houlihan and White, 2002). This document, like Sport: Raising the Game, included an introduction by the Prime Minister. However, Houlihan (2000: 175) stated that the new government wished to “outshine” the previous government’s commitment to elite sport. The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, personally continued his predecessor’s interest in sport and was particularly visible as part of London’s successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (Masterman, 2013). Indeed, Green (2007; 2009) highlighted that the government support for the bid can be seen as a manifestation of the commitment to sport at the highest level. Despite the continued prioritisation of sport and personal commitment by the Prime Minister, he stated in the foreword to A Sporting Future for All, “The Government does not and should not run sport.” (DCMS, 2000: 3), indicating a view that direct intervention was not appropriate.

Devolved powers in Scotland and Wales, following Parliament Acts of 1998, gave greater responsibility for sport to the home countries. Northern Ireland had held devolved powers, including responsibility for sport for some considerable time. As was seen in the case of the Westminster government in the past, the place of sport in the devolved governments has not always been clear and in all three home countries it is positioned within departments alongside other responsibilities. In Wales, sport is part of the Department for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, in Scotland, the Minister for the Commonwealth Games and Sport is part of the Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy and in Northern Ireland, sport is positioned within the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure. These departments all hold responsibilities for the home country sports councils. Thomson (2010), writing at the time of the election of the Coalition government, noted that there had been little divergence in policy between Scotland and the rest of the UK following devolution, with the exception of school sport, over the preceding ten years.
It has been demonstrated above that central government interest and involvement in sport increased over time but it is also important to consider why this has happened. The initial willingness of government to discuss sport came as a result of the Wolfenden report in 1960, and Coghlan (1990) cited the all-encompassing nature of the report and high esteem of people on the committee that was responsible for the report as being reasons for this. However, the government was not willing to fully endorse the recommendations of the Wolfenden report, most notably the formation of an executive Sports Council. The scale of government involvement that can be seen now did not begin in earnest until the mid-1990s when the Labour government's modernisation agenda led to a more contractual relationship between government and arms-length bodies (Houlihan and Green, 2009). It is important to note throughout that significant developments and changes in sports policy came about at times when there were sympathetic Ministers and senior officials who favoured sport and were keen to see it develop. With reference to elite sport in particular, Houlihan (2000: 179) wrote that the voice of the sport policy community has only been successful due to “a fortuitous coincidence of circumstance” of sympathetic ministers and popular opinion.

However, there were important changes that encouraged and complemented the rise of sport as a concern for central government and four reasons are proposed here. Firstly, the establishment of an increasingly distinct occupational group linked to governance, administration and delivery of sport, secondly, the connections made between sport and social policy, especially in relation to young people and health, thirdly, the place of physical education in the establishment of the national curriculum and linking of physical education, youth and sport objectives and, finally, the growth in prominence of international sport success, especially at the Olympic Games.

The first reason for increased government involvement in sport was the establishment of the occupational group and aspiring profession of sport development. Coghlan (1990) stated that the professionalization of sport, in terms of coaching and administration, began in the 1960s due to the availability of local authority funds to pay wages. There was also funding available through the Advisory Sports Council to pay staff working for National Governing Bodies: the focus was initially on administrative staffing and, once the NGB had sufficient capacity, then sport development officers were also paid (Houlihan and White, 2002). During the 1970s, the reorganisation of local government left authorities with funds available for
capital investment and many authorities chose to spend this money on building of sport and leisure facilities. Along with this physical infrastructure, personnel were developed to deliver outreach programmes, resulting in the creation of a new form of career for sport development (McDonald, 1995). The establishment of the Great Britain Sports Council as an executive body in 1972 further consolidated the concept of sport administration and sport development as an emerging profession. Although there is little evidence of the lobbying power of the majority of personnel in such professions, the Sports Council had high profile leadership and, as so many of the professionals were funded through public money, it made this growing profession and the activities that were carried out to fulfil government policy difficult for government to ignore.

The second reason for increased government involvement in sport was the link made between sport and other areas of government policy. Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nodland and Rommetvedt (2007: 54) argued that the growing awareness by governments that sport can help to fulfil wider policy aims, including “improved behaviour among the young, community integration, urban regeneration and strengthened national morale” could account for the growing interest in sport. This first came to the fore in the UK in the 1980s. Bramham (2001: 17) wrote that the Thatcher government “was not completely deaf to the extrinsic benefits of sports provision” for young people, but it was civil unrest in the early 1980s when sport was then linked to social objectives. In response to the riots in 1981, the Sports Council was called upon to provide sport to engage and manage the behaviour of young people in urban areas, resulting in the Sport Action programme initially run in the West Midlands and London (McDonald, 1995; Collins, 2010).

The third reason for increased government involvement in sport was the establishment of the National Curriculum and the position of physical education within it. Following the Education Reform Act of 1988, the National Curriculum for Physical Education was published in 1991 and introduced into schools in 1992. Houlihan and Green (2006: 73) described a “palpable sense of relief” at the subject’s inclusion as a foundation subject. However, the content is described by Houlihan (1997: 244) as a “compromise” in light of the differing views of teachers and the government, with the government’s ongoing concern about restoration of competitive sport. At this point, the PE teachers’ lobbying power (through the organisations BAALPE and PEAUK) was limited due to a lack of consensus and knowledge on how to engage ministers (Talbot, 1995) but as a group they were viewed as proactive in
the setting of the National Curriculum for PE (Houlihan and Green 2006). National Governing Bodies for sport took an interest to ensure that their sport was included in the curriculum. The debate and subsequent decision about PE in the National Curriculum brought it to the attention of politicians and also alerted the major NGBs that they could not take the prominence of sport and physical education in the curriculum for granted but rather its position needed to be justified and defended.

John Major’s government linked sport and young people as development of sports opportunities within the education setting formed one of the two priorities for Sport: Raising the Game (DNH, 1995). The overlap between sport policy and education continued under Labour and the Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) initiative was introduced in 2002. PESSCL was described by Bloyce and Smith (2010: 66) as “one of the most significant youth sport policy initiatives to have been introduced in schools in England in recent years.” The Youth Sport Trust (YST) was responsible for the implementation of this policy initiative, which was overseen jointly by DfES/DCSF and DCMS (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). More recently, the links between taking regular physical activity and improved health have been targeted by government policy and programming. The Department of Health’s Change 4 Life programme, which started in 2009, includes physical activity and the partners of the programme include DCMS and national sports organisations including the YST and the national governing bodies for swimming and cycling.

The final reason for government involvement in sport was the increased political importance of the success of the UK’s international sports teams and competitors. The conflict of amateurism versus professionalism, the status of sportspeople and therefore their eligibility to compete in British sport is well documented (see Polley, 1998; Holt and Mason, 2000). As well as being of significance for sports people and teams, McDonald (2011) stated that the culture of amateurism influenced UK government views up to the 1980s. Since the 1960s, international sport has become more high profile and thus more professional and commercial. Coghlan (1990) highlighted an increasing access to televised sport in the 1960s as the starting point for a greater awareness amongst the public of the highs and lows of national sports teams.

---

3 The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was re-organised and renamed in 2007 and to become the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).
2.3 The prominence of elite sport in government policy

The international context, especially the growth of competition in major events such as the Olympic Games, has been an important factor in the government’s increasing focus on elite sport policy. The relaxing of the IOC’s rules on eligibility of competitors for the Olympic Games, allowing professionals to compete and thus creating more ‘open’ competition was a fundamental change Olympic movement (Senn, 1999). The Olympic Games have also become more competitive, with more countries taking part, especially following the break up of the Soviet Union and the end to the period of political boycotts that were seen in the 1970s and 1980s. The change to eligibility rules brought the argument of amateurism and professionalism to the fore, and perhaps to a close: Houlihan and White (2002: 74) stated that the priority of elite sport in *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995) “finally put the myth of the inspired British amateur to rest”. Green and Houlihan (2005: 168) stated that amateurism been an issue in British sport policy and progress had been “hampered by deeply-rooted disdain for a professional approach to sport and the consequent support for high quality coaching, full-time training and first class facilities.”

In *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995) there was clear prioritisation of elite sport and school sport (Bloyce and Smith, 2010; Houlihan and White, 2002) and Green (2007: 937-8) stated that it “abandoned any pretence of an integrated and multidimensional approach to sports”. The prioritisation of elite sport was based on a notion of national pride (Coalter, 2007) and competitive school sport was prioritised as the starting point for achieving excellence (McDonald, 1995). Mass participation sport was marginalised within central government policy, as Coalter (2007: 14) stated, the government abandoned the ‘sport for all’ slogan and “effectively ignored the central role of local government in promoting social citizenship and mass participation”. Following their election in 1997, the Labour government reiterated these priorities in their first sports policy document, *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000).

With this added impetus from central government, elite sport began to prosper. Bloyce and Smith (2010: 142) stated “no systematic attempt was made to enhance ESD [elite sport development] until the election of John Major’s government”. This view was supported by Green (2006: 226) who stated that government support for elite sport had been “un-coordinated and fragmented” up to this point. In *Sport: Raising the Game*, the idea of having a centralised programme of facilities, coaching
and science and medicine services, referred to at the time as the British Academy of Sport, was first mooted. Whilst the plans did not manifest exactly as the government of the time outlined in their policy document, many of the suggestions made were delivered and are central components of the British high performance sport system today.

The government’s rationale for prioritising elite sport development within its policies has not always been explicit. In *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995: 2), it is stated that sport is “one of the defining characteristics of nationhood and of local pride.” This is sweeping statement with no evidence offered to support the claim but the publication of the document coincided with a period of disappointing results in international sports competition, most notably the Ashes in 1993 and the FIFA World Cup in 1994 (McDonald, 1995). In Labour’s first sport policy document, *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000), again there is a focus on developing elite sport but there is little explanation of why. The foreword by the Prime Minister stated “Sport matters” (DCMS, 2000: 2) by way of introduction and the historical significance of British success plus events and venues such as Wimbledon and Lords were highlighted but the explanation of why the government is interested in high performance sport is limited. In *Game Plan*, Labour’s second sport policy document, the reason for supporting elite sport was more explicit: “International sporting success helps generate pride and a sense of national identity, and a ‘feel good factor’. It also boosts the profile of a sport and increases interest in participation.” (DCMS/The Strategy Unit, 2002: 9). In the Labour government’s final policy document for sport, *Playing to win: A New Era for Sport*, the introduction stated, “When you play sport, you play to win” (DCMS, 2008a: 1), which was a very clear statement of the government’s aspirations. This was supported by a further statement: “Our ambition is simple – we want to become a truly world leading sporting nation.” (DCMS, 2008a: 3) and a clear aim for achievement of fourth place in the medal table at the London 2012 Olympic Games. Again, the reason for the government’s focus was not made explicit but the underpinning rationale seemed to be the London 2012 Games, to which regular mentions were made.

So national pride and the potential for success on the international stage to encourage participation seem to be the government’s main reasons for supporting the development of an elite sport system. Having suffered some significant failures on the world stage, not least winning only one gold medal at the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996, the government wanted to change the fortunes of British athletes
competing internationally. Green and Houlihan (2005: 168) noted that the development of elite sport in Australia and Canada had come about as the result of their teams' failings at Olympic Games and “for the UK a more generalised sense of decline that built up during the 1990s, which was confirmed by the exceptionally poor performance at the Atlanta Olympic Games in 1996.”

For a long time, state involvement in the development of elite sport had been viewed as something that was largely confined to communist nations such as the Soviet Union but there was a growing number of governments becoming more involved in high performance sport, not least Canada and Australia as noted above but also elsewhere in Europe, as described by the SPLISS study (De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, van Bottenburg and De Knop, 2008). The Labour government was aware of the potential of learning approached from other countries: “We need to learn the lessons of our competitor nations and have the most professional system for talent development and support of excellence” (DCMS, 2000: 15).

In addition to developing athletes, there was also an increased interest in the hosting of major sports events in the UK from the 1990s onwards. There were failed bids for hosting the Olympic Games in Birmingham (1992) and Manchester (1996 and 2000) (Masterman, 2013) but the hosting of the UEFA European Championships in England in 1996 was viewed as a very successful event (English Sports Council, 1997). The government was explicit in its intentions to bring more events to the UK in its document Game Plan: “‘mega events’ such as the Olympic Games or World Athletics Championships can only succeed if central government is closely engaged from an early stage… A 20-year strategy for bidding for mega events will be part of our wider vision for sport over the next two decades.” (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2002: 10). At this point the government sought to clarify the roles and responsibilities of national and local partners including coordination functions and funding.

2.4 The role of the Sports Councils

Following the recommendations by the Wolfenden Committee that a national sports council should be established, and after much discussion at government level about the merits of such a body being formed, the non-executive Advisory Sports Council (ASC) was established in 1965 with the Minister Denis Howell as the Chairman (Coghlan, 1990). This decision was described by Green (2007: 935) as “the first
indication of serious government intervention into the sport and recreation sector.” When the Advisory Sports Council (ASC) was formed in, Regional Sports Councils were in England and Sports Councils for Scotland and Wales were also established, and they took on the role of advising the ASC (Bloyce and Smith, 2010).

Following the change of government in 1970, an executive body, named the Great Britain Sports Council, was established by Royal Charter in 1972. Houlihan (2011: 16) described this development as “the first phase of government’s active involvement in sport”. The primary focus of the new body was sports participation, with a remit for both England and the whole of the UK. This dual remit for England and the UK sowed the seeds for tension between the priorities and the overall purpose of the organisation. National Sports Councils for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland were also established by Royal Charter, in 1971, 1972 and 1974 respectively. The Scottish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Wales took responsibility for the National Sports Centres located in their countries and their general remits were related to mass participation sport focusing on facility development and the British Sport for All programme (Coghlan, 1990).

The number of sports that received support from the Sports Council fluctuated over time. The 1978/79 Sports Council Annual Report listed 62 sports NGBs that received funding in that year and this had increased to 69 in 1985/86 (The Sports Council, 1979, 1986). Today Sport England ‘recognises’ 148 sports, some of which do not have a governing body in England, such as darts, and others of which are represented by more than one governing body such as golf (Sport England4). Although a huge number of sports are ‘recognised’ by Sport England, the organisation only directly funds 46 NGBs, most of which represent sports that are part of the Olympic Games and/or the Commonwealth Games. UK Sport funded 27 Olympic sports and 18 Paralympic sports ahead of the London 2012 Games (UK Sport, 2012a). All of the sports funded by UK Sport for their high performance programmes also receive funding from Sport England for their participation programmes. So the number of sports that receive direct funding from the sports councils has narrowed.

Along with the government, the Sports Council’s view of elite sport changed over time. The Sports Council’s policy document Sport in the Community: The Next Ten

Years (The Sports Council, 1982a: 40) indicated an awareness of and interest in promoting elite sport but also showed an intention to take a hands-off approach: “Some countries invest vast public funds in special facilities, training programmes and financial and status rewards for elite athletes, in order to win prestige and trade internationally. It is neither tradition nor policy to treat top level sport in this way in Britain.” However, at this time there were areas where the Sports Council was willing to assist such as helping NGBs to develop their coaches and the provision of appropriate facilities for training and competition.

There was a significant change in 1984 when a steering group was set up to examine how to best prepare athletes for the Olympic Games and the recommendations made by this group showed a clear direction for the development for high performance sport including financial support, provision of medical services and development of facilities and training (Sports Council, 1986). The suggestion for additional financial support was acted upon quickly and more funding was made available for athletes training for the 1988 Olympic Games, including investment secured from the commercial sector. Then when the government published its plans for sport in *Sport: Raising the Game*, there was a central role for the Sports Council in delivering the government’s aims and changing the fortunes of the elite sport in the UK.

The Great Britain Sports Council was restructured in 1996 and it was split to form the UK Sports Council (re-branded as UK Sport in 1999) and the English Sports Council (re-branded as Sport England in 1999): the former took responsibility for high-performance sport, and the latter took responsibility for overall sport development (Houlihan and White, 2002). This went some of the way to resolve the issue detailed above, removing the conflict between British and English concerns and beginning to clarify the different organisations’ responsibilities. This change indicated the government’s attitude towards the importance of elite sport by creating an organisation with the specific remit of developing elite sport and ensuring success for British teams on the world stage, one of the key objectives of *Sport: Raising the Game*. This change also reflects the government’s fundamental understanding of sport in terms of separation of high performance sport and mass participation.

Some tension still remained, as there was some overlap in the organisations’ remits with regards high-performance sport, with Sport England having targets for achieving international sport success in its strategies. The government acknowledged these
issues and stated in *Game Plan*, “The sports councils themselves need to find better ways of working together to deliver increased international success.” (DCMS/The Strategy Unit, 2002: 140). This issue was clarified further when UK Sport took full control of high-performance sport in 2006 (McDonald, 2011). The issue of responsibility for elite sport comes to the fore when the British team is preparing for an Olympic Games due to the crossover of responsibility of UK Sport and the British Olympic Association (BOA). While UK Sport funds and supports NGBs and athletes’ in their four-year preparation for the Olympic Games, it is the BOA who is responsible for the support immediately before and during the Games. This tension has resulted in some largely rhetorical challenges on the part of the BOA to take full responsibility for elite sport. Sport England has changed its strategic approach on a number of occasions, mainly due to a steer from the government, which has rarely had a clear idea of what ‘sport’ is and how it should be managed in terms of development. Collins (2010: 27) noted that in the early 2000s, Sport England was no longer “‘arms-length’… it was effectively an agency of government”, as it was frequently obliged to shift the focus of its work as a result of changes in government priorities.

The home country sports councils have all articulated their aspirations for developing excellence. Following the division of the Sports Councils, the English Sports Council published *England, the sporting nation* (English Sports Council, 1997). Although the intended division of responsibilities between the sports councils for England the UK was clear, there was some overlap because there are circumstances when international representation is organised by the home country, not the UK. As a result the document not only articulated a policy for the major Olympic sports where English athletes compete as part of the UK, but also covered sports such as netball and cricket where England competes as one of the four home countries. Both sportscotland and Sport Wales have strong policies for elite sport in their countries. In the document *Reaching Higher* (Scottish Executive, 2007: 8), there is a stated aspiration for Scotland to have “a world-wide reputation as a successful sporting nation”. In the document *A Vision for Sport in Wales* (Sport Wales, 2011: 8) one of the priorities is “Sporting Excellence: We are a nation that excels in nurturing sporting talent and delivers ongoing success on the international stage.” Both Scotland and Wales have their own sports institutes to support the development of elite performers. Politically, elite sport success by the home countries is viewed as important, with a particular focus on the Commonwealth Games. With specific
reference to Scotland, Thomson (2010: 135) stated that sport has become very “nationalistic” and that this is connected to “the idea of nation-building”.

A key development within the structure of sport policy has been the relationship between the sports councils and the organisations that they support and fund. The Labour government took on a wide agenda of modernisation of government and public institutions, including sport (Houlihan and Green, 2009). The Labour government’s policy on sport A Sporting Future for All (DCMS/Strategy Unit, 2000) stated that a professional and modern approach would yield greater success and Houlihan and Green (2009: 7) described the plan of “transforming Sport England into a modern organization and also one capable as acting as the driver of modernization of the governing bodies.” This was not a new concept: Coghlan (1990) noted that the scale of early grant aid to national governing bodies for sport development was dependent on sufficient administrative capacity within the organisations. As early as the mid-1980s there was a clear drive from the Sports Council that sport had to be accountable for the public money that was invested: “The Council has continued to ensure that the public money entrusted to its care is properly spent” (Sports Council, 1986: 5). Sport England’s current mechanism for setting targets and monitoring and evaluating progress within National Governing Bodies is the Whole Sport Plan. These plans guide the NGBs work and are a condition of funding from Sport England. UK Sport’s World Class Performance and Mission 2012 programmes have been designed to allow NGBs and UK Sport as the funder to evaluate their progress, particularly in their preparation for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. While these processes make the conditions of funding and the responsibilities of both parties clear, Bloyce and Smith (2010) raised issues around the burden of multiple funding and monitoring systems for NGBs.

As part of the drive to improve standards in performance, as well as establishing mechanisms for accountability, the World Class Performance (WCP) programme was established in 1997. The programme is described by Houlihan and White (2002: 108) as providing “specific policy infrastructure” for elite development. Results in the Olympic Games improved for the Great Britain and Northern Ireland team (see Table 2.1) and, as a consequence of the system that is now in place, the success at the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2008 were greater than expected (Green, 2009). Over time, the support for elite sport has broadened beyond the funding of NGBs and athletes to include sports medicine and a strategic approach and significant funding for the hosting of Major events in the UK.
Table 2.1 – The Great Britain and Northern Ireland team’s medal table position and medal totals at the Olympic Games 1996-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Olympics</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Gold</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Bronze</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996 Atlanta</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 Sydney</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004 Athens</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008 Beijing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: McDonald (2011: 379)

Overall, the responsibilities for elite sport amongst key organisations have become clearer, in particular the lead role for UK Sport in funding elite development, but there is overlap as both Sport England and YST continue to take varying degrees of responsibility for developing talent. Phillpots (2011: 139) described the importance of “significant government investment” in achieving the clarity of roles and the development of the structures. The modernisation agenda under the previous government led to a more contractual relationship between the government and NGBs through UK Sport and Sport England. The restructuring of the GB Sports Council to form the UK Sports Council and English Sports Council, responsible for elite and participation sport respectively provided a vehicle for developing elite sport in a systematic way with high levels of accountability. So the combination of funding and a clear structure has supported the development of elite sport.

2.5 Funding

As there was little interest in sport from central government until the 1960s, so it was that there was little public investment in elite sport. The government’s financial support for elite sport began in the 1960s when the government pledged to underwrite the monies necessary for British teams to travel to the Olympic Games (Coghlan, 1990). Preceding this pledge from the government, the costs for transport, accommodation and kitting out the Olympic team were met by the British Olympic Association with help from the public via the Olympic Appeal so the financial support from the government meant that team costs would be met if sufficient funds could not be raised via the appeal: “For the first time a safety net has been provided” (Coghlan, 1990: 33). The government continued to offer funding for participation at the Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games as well as funding for preparation training and
support for coaches and officials to attend international events and conferences, although NGBs were expected to provide funding for half the costs. Coghlan (1990:34) highlighted the importance of this development in public funding for elite sport and wrote, “The pattern was thus set for the future.”

As noted in the previous section, the Sports Council gradually took an increased interest in elite sport and this was supported by increasing levels of funding being made available for NGBs’ programmes for their elite athletes. There was specific funding for preparation for major events and there was additional funding made available for coaching and international travel to events. Table 2.1 indicates the amounts of funding paid to NGBs for preparation training.

Table 2.1 – Amounts of funding paid to NGBs for ‘Preparation training’ 1976-1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1976/77</td>
<td>£235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977/78</td>
<td>£480,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978/79</td>
<td>£603,569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979/80</td>
<td>£596,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980/81</td>
<td>£802,019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981/82</td>
<td>£789,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983/84</td>
<td>£987,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984/85</td>
<td>£842,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1985, funding was secured from the commercial sector to supplement funding from the government for both mass participation programmes and high performance sport: £1.5million was secured from an insurance company, Minet Holding Group, to support athletes in their preparation for the both the summer and winter Olympic Games in 1988 (Sports Council, 1986).

The publication of Sport: Raising the Game (DNH, 1995), which prioritised elite sport, also coincided with the establishment of the National Lottery, which provided a new funding opportunity for sport (Houlihan and White, 2002; Green, 2009; Bloyce and Smith, 2010; McDonald, 2011). The government expected that the new funding mechanism would be crucial to sport in the UK: “The existence of the National Lottery has transformed the prospects of British Sport” (DNH, 1995: 1). Green and Houlihan (2005: 3) described the introduction of the National Lottery as being critical in the development of elite sport: “The significance of Lottery monies for the emergence of a more systematic approach to developing the country’s elite athletes
cannot be underestimated.” Figure 2.1 shows the share of National Lottery money given to sport and other good causes from 1995 to 2012.

Figure 2.1 – National Lottery total funding to good causes 1995 – 2014

It is important to consider why the National Lottery as a new funding stream was so important. The increase in the amount of money available for sport is significant but the control of the funds is also an important point to examine. Houlihan and White (2002: 78) wrote that the funds from the National Lottery “altered the pattern of resource dependencies” within sports organisations. Furthermore, Houlihan (2005: 177) highlighted that the introduction of the National Lottery “increased markedly the influence of central government and its agencies” and cited UK Sport’s work in modernising the NGBs that it funds. As National Lottery distributors, in this case Sport England and UK Sport, have had more money to distribute, so accountability procedures have been tightened, as highlighted in the previous section.

Source: DCMS\textsuperscript{5}. Data last updated 17 March 2014

\textsuperscript{5} http://www.lottery.culture.gov.uk/Search.aspx accessed 25/03/2014
There was a generally accepted view that more money meant that the system would improve. A review of elite sport funding recommended increased funding to ensure that results improved at the Commonwealth Games and Olympic Games (Cunningham, 2001). A key recommendation of report was ensuring that funding remained stable over the four-year period of preparation for the Olympic Games: “Stable funding is a major factor in preparing athletes over a four year Olympic cycle. Without this guarantee, performance directors cannot devise and implement effective performance plans and achieve World Class results.” (Cunningham, 2001: 17).

From 2005, the hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games impacted upon investment in sport. The success of the London 2012 bid served to justify the government’s commitment to achieving success at the elite level (Green, 2009) as well as providing UK Sport with more funds to devote to areas such as talent identification and development and sport science. One direct impact of the successful bid was an extra £200million of exchequer funds for elite sport was committed as part of the 2006 budget (Green, 2007), on top of the existing exchequer and Lottery funds. As well as an increase in funds, the 2012 decision prompted a change of direction in terms of which sports would be funded. While the home-country sports councils continued to fund a broad spectrum of Olympic and non-Olympic sports, UK Sport altered its investment principles to funding only Olympic and Paralympic sports (UK Sport). Concerns were raised by the House of Commons Select Committee for Public Accounts and the National Audit Office about the high level of funding for elite sport, and therefore the marginalisation of other aspects of sport, and Green (2007) and McDonald (2011) acknowledged that these questions were never truly answered and that the premise of elite success leading to a “trickle-down” or inspiration effect on the general public taking up sport and recreation activities has no evidence to support it. However, both public funding and the prioritisation of elite success continue despite these reservations.

Jones (2011) and Houlihan and Lindsey (2013) stated that different sport policy areas, namely elite sport and community sport, must compete to get resourcing from government. Even within elite sport, there is competition for support and Jones (2011) highlighted UK Sport’s No Compromise model of investment whereby only the more high-achieving sports are allocated financial support. There is also competition for funding from the commercial sector at both an organisational and individual level where the most commercially viable sports, clubs and individuals are able to earn the most money.
2.6 Conclusion

The first conclusion that can be drawn is that government interest in sport as a whole has increased and elite sport has taken a central position within the government’s policies for sport since the 1990s. There is evidence of the government accepting a certain degree of responsibility elite sport success, certainly in terms of the British team at the Olympic Games. There is currently clarity of purpose, which is reinforced by structures for achieving the government’s aims within elite sport. In spite of changes of government, the position of elite sport within the wider policy system has been stable. The successful hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has potentially consolidated this consensus, although whether the current depth of commitment is maintained after 2016 remains to be seen.

The second conclusion is that a sound structure for managing and delivering policies has been established. There are specific programmes that have been developed to ensure quality provision of services and also strict processes of accountability for the organisations involved in the Olympic and Paralympic elite sport policy sector. UK Sport’s role is central to this but management of their partners and drawing the lines of responsibility has not always been stable. This structure has reinforced the separation of elite sport from mass participation as these two elements of sport policy have separate funding and separate organisations managing policy delivery. A long-term impact of the Labour government’s modernisation policy has been an increasingly contractual relationship between the government’s agencies and the NGBs that the agencies fund.

Finally, the impact of increased public funding, especially from the National Lottery has been key to developments to date. Without this funding it is unlikely that the system would have been established to the same scale and quality. Although the global economic crisis might have been expected to have impacted upon the government’s approach to public spending on sport, the sub-sector has remained relatively protected from severe public expenditure cuts.

Sport policy developments from the 1960s to 2010 has led to the establishment of a stable policy environment for elite sport in the UK. The three elements summarised above – political interest, organisational arrangements and funding – can be described as the fundamental parts of the contemporary sport policy landscape in the UK. The combination of the developments that have taken place since the 1990s
reflect the strength of interest in elite sport as a policy priority and how this aspect of
sport policy is valued by different governments, albeit for a wide range of
instrumental purposes including nation branding, generation of a ‘feel good factor’,
the promotion of participation and, with regards to hosting events, regeneration and
economic gains. The strength of the perceived utility of elite sport is indicated by the
continuity of financial and political support despite a significant change of
government and sever financial crisis.
Chapter 3 – Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the existing literature on policymaking in order to form a theoretical basis for analysis for this study. This review will focus on five key concepts and bodies of theory within the study of policymaking. Firstly, the concept of policy will be explained in order to establish a definition to be used throughout this study. Secondly, the concept of power in relation to interests and stakeholders will be explored. Thirdly, macro-level theories of the distribution of power will be examined. Fourthly, the concepts of stability and change will be briefly explored and, finally, meso-level theoretical frameworks of policymaking will be explained and analysed for their applicability.

The nature of the contemporary elite sport policy landscape in the UK, which was explored in the previous chapter, and the way in which decisions are made necessitates a focus on the meso-level of policymaking so theories and frameworks explored in this chapter have been identified accordingly. The machinations of power within the system can be seen as being overt and linked to elements such as resource dependency but can also be described as diffuse and dynamic and therefore theories of power are considered as part of the literature review. The youth of the field of policy studies in sport, coupled with the complexities and dynamic nature of the policy field, means that there is no single framework for analysis that is generally accepted, therefore this research seeks to evaluate the potential of a set of meso-level frameworks to be used in the data analysis both for the requirements of this research and in order to make a contribution to literature in the field of sport policy analysis.

3.2 Policy

It is vital to define the concept of policy in order to achieve meaningful analysis. Policy can be seen as “a rational, administrative and bureaucratic process” and “a formal government decision or structural intervention” (Shaw, 2010: 199). A challenge here is that the term ‘policy’ does not have a fixed definition (Cairney, 2012). Hajer (1993), Houlihan (1991), Kay (2005) and Parsons (1995) all raised the idea of action and inaction as constituting aspects of our understanding of policy: it may be the policy of a government not to act or intervene on a certain issue or
position. Hajer (1993: 43) stated “The inaction is explained in terms of a conscious exercise of power by key actors.” Kay (2005: 556) wrote, “Policy expresses a general set of objectives or a desired state of affairs” and “policy is about choice”, including action and inaction. Other analyses of the concept indicate that it is something rational and achievable, with objectives attached, and the result of consideration of alternatives (Houlihan, 1991; Parsons, 1995). A further conceptualisation of policy is as aspiration, implying something less prescriptive than that which is achievable or measurable. Shaw (2010: 196) highlighted two different ways of conceptualising policy in terms of considering “the extent to which policy is a formal, rational process that can be planned in advance as opposed to an emergent stream of social action.”

In order to study policy at the level of the state, a definition of public policy should be identified. Parsons (1995) explored the term 'public' in depth and separated it from that which is private or individual. Parsons (1995: 3) stated, “The public comprises that dimension of human activity which is regarded as requiring governmental or social regulation or intervention, or at least common action”. Houlihan (1991: 5) defined public policy as that which is “concerned with the actions and positions adopted by the state”. In later work, Houlihan (2005: 165) related public policies to resourcing and stated that public policies are those that “originate within, or are dependent upon resources of, the state”.

When studying policy, it should be considered that policies could exist at various levels in different institutional settings, not just at the level of governments (Houlihan, 1991). Kay (2005) recognised that policy could be studied by examining two levels of policy: policy as a whole, or a ‘system’, or at the programme level. Kay (2005: 557) described a policy system as “a complex, composite variable consisting of many interrelated elements” and stated that there can be several policy subsystems within a policy system. He used the example of health policy as a ‘system’ and primary care and public health as subsystems. Kay (2005: 557) described a policy programme as “a specific combination of laws, commitments, appropriations, organizations and personnel.” It can be argued that a policy programme is more easily studied because it is smaller and more discrete than a policy system, or even a subsystem.

Using Kay’s descriptions, sport policy could be described as a policy system, and its subsystems would include community sport, elite sport, youth sport, regulatory bodies (for example those responsible for licensing, betting or anti-doping) and land use and planning, such as sports facilities. Policy programmes could include the
World Class Performance Programme through which public funding is distributed to sports for services and grants to support elite athletes.

Dery (1999) distinguishes between policymaking and policytaking, highlighting the difference between policies that are deliberate and those that come about as a result of change or a new policy elsewhere. Policymaking is a deliberate action to create or change policy within a given policy area. Policytaking is the creation or change in policy that comes about as a by-product of efforts within another policy area. In the case of the sport and education policies highlighted above, these were policies that were owned and resourced by the Department of Education so this could be seen as an example of sport policytaking. One view of the government’s support of the hosting of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games could be that the driver for the bid was not sport but urban regeneration and international relations so the growth of resourcing and policymaking around sport was an incidental, fortuitous by-product of other objectives.

The discussion above highlights that public policy is that which includes decisions made by government including the setting of objectives and the distribution of public resources and it can include decisions to intervene in certain issues or consciously not intervene if it is not deemed necessary. This definition resonates with the three key elements of the elite sport policy landscape, organisations, public funding and political salience, that were identified in the previous chapter.

3.3 Power

It is important to understand the concept of power as part of the policymaking process. Hajer (1993) highlighted the exercising of power as a key mechanism in which political actors seek to influence others. Furthermore, assumptions about the distribution of power in society and the means by which power is operationalised are implicit if not always explicit in both macro- and meso-level theorising of the policy process in relation to sport. This section will explore the work of two key theorists of power: Foucault and Lukes. These two theorists have been selected for analysis because of the relevance of their work to policy analysis. Foucault’s work has been used in relation to analysing different facets of sport. For example, Markula and Pringle’s (2006) book examined elements including exercise, health and the gendered body.
A key feature of Foucault’s work is the location of power: he rejected the idea of power being located within the ruling elite or the state. Instead he focused on power at the local or individual level, or “power at its extremities” (Foucault, 1986: 232). Markula and Pringle (2006: 19) explained that Foucault saw “the body as a site of power” and focused on the personal and local nature of power as opposed to power within organisations or government hierarchy. Foucault also rejected the idea of power as a process of repression but rather conceptualised it as processes manifest in the relationship between people (Foucault, 1986; O’Farrell, 2005; Markula and Pringle, 2006). Furthermore, power, according to Foucault, is not fixed, rather it “circulates” (Foucault, 1986: 234), nor is it a one-way process of an individual exercising power over another, but instead “individuals are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (Foucault, 1986: 234).

Foucault conceived a particular type of power through the notion of governmentality. O’Farrell (2005: 107) explained this concept as “the rationalisation and systematisation of a particular way of exercising political sovereignty through the government of people’s conduct”. This extends the idea of the power of the state from being simply ruling a country or territory to having power to manage or manipulate people’s behaviour. O’Farrell (2005) went on to explain how Foucault’s theories evolved to use the term governmentality in relation to all levels of governing, including self-governance, which is more aligned with his general views of power as being local, or of the body.

Rose (1993: 286) argued that governmentality, as conceived by Foucault, “suggests alternative ways of thinking the activity of politics” [sic]. Rose described a link between personal regulation and the power of government that is observed by behaviour that conforms to the dominant political discourse without direct intervention but through social mechanisms. He also explored the significance of experts in this process. Rose (1993: 298) went on to describe the notion of ‘advanced liberalism’, which he defined as “to govern without governing society” but through influencing autonomous people within the society, with the assistance of experts and in a way that multiplies through the society, reflecting Foucault’s notion of local power. An example of this within sport policy could be to instil a sense of pride in a nation’s elite sport success, which could serve to justify public spending on an elite sport development system. This conceptualisation resonates with Kingdon’s political stream, to be discussed later in the chapter.
Houlihan and Green (2009) argued that governmentality resonated with the Labour government's policy of modernisation. Modernisation was a programme of development of public bodies in order to make them more efficient and effective partners of government and was based on many lessons learned from the private sector around management and accountability. The plans for modernising sports organisations were first set out in the sport policy document *A Sporting Future For All* (DCMS, 2000), which included plans such as improving administration and rewarding organisations that delivered on their targets with additional resource and responsibility. Houlihan and Green (2009) highlighted that while the central government delegated a lot of responsibility, there was an expectation placed upon organisations that their delivery had to be excellent, so autonomy was still something that was conditional and to be granted by government, and therefore the government retained control over the system. Various processes for setting targets and auditing were put in place by the government and, "The net effect of the application of these technologies is to ensure that organizations are instrumental in their own self-government and engaged in the reflexive monitoring of their organization's actions" (Houlihan and Green, 2009: 682).

Lukes' theory of power consists of citing and critiquing two existing explanations, or dimensions, of power and seeking to improve upon these by proposing a third dimension of power. Lukes (2005) explained that the one-dimensional view of power focuses on the observable exercising of power by person A over person B, mainly in the process of decision-making, and where there is a conflict between preferences. For example, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) produces rules on what substances are banned for use by athletes, the testing procedures, the penalties and the need for whereabouts data for all athletes. Athletes, and the organisations that govern them on a national and international level, must adhere to WADA's rules in order to compete, thus WADA has control over the conduct of athletes. Lukes' criticism of this view of power is that it is overly simplistic and he stated that it is "unable to exploit" the subtleties of power (2005: 19). Lukes linked his critique of this view of power to more general misgivings about pluralism, and cited that the key theorists of the one-dimensional view considered themselves pluralists, and he described the works of these theorists as giving a "misleadingly sanguine pluralist picture of American politics" (2005: 20).
Lukes noted that Bachrach and Baratz shared the criticisms of the one-dimensional view and it is their theories of power that informed Lukes’ two-dimensional view. Central to the two-dimensional view is the idea of bias and the idea that those with power can prevent certain issues being discussed, which was labelled ‘non-decisions’. For example, UK Sport has taken the step of only funding Olympic and Paralympic sports, therefore sports that do not fit into this category do not have access to resources and do not have a voice to influence UK Sport’s position. Lukes described power in this two-dimensional view as including coercion, influence, authority, force and manipulation.

Although one of the key criticisms of the one-dimensional view is the focus on overt decision-making, there is an acknowledgement that non-decisions are also decisions. A key difference that Lukes highlighted was that the one-dimensional view focused on decisions about acknowledged issues whereas the two-dimensional view emphasised the “potential issues which non-decision-making prevents from being actual” (2005: 23). While Lukes acknowledged the advance in the understanding of power from the two-dimensional view, his critique of this view is that, like the one-dimensional view, it focused on the exercise of power, which is generally observable.

Lukes’ three-dimensional view of power focuses on the unobservable, latent forces at work in power relationships, such as social myths, language and symbols (Parsons, 1995). Lorenzi (2006: 92) explained the latent conflict in Lukes’ three-dimensional view as being interests that “those subject to power do not express or even remain unaware of.” In relation to a specific study of city politics by Bachrach and Baratz, Lukes stated that the three-dimensional view could offer a way of analysing “inactivity… and the sheer weight of institutions” in affecting or preventing change (2005: 40). For example, for a long time in the development of sport in the UK, disability sport was not part of the policy agenda: this was not an issue as there was no voice from to challenge the omission and therefore the situation continued. So values or ideologies that are deeply ingrained within a policy system can be important when it comes to controlling the policy agenda.

A key criticism of Lukes’ third dimension of power has been that unobservable elements cannot be studied in an empirical way, whereas the first and second dimensions have observable and measurable actions and outcomes. Lukes acknowledged this criticism and countered it by stating “It does not follow that, just because it is difficult or even impossible to show that power has been exercised in a
given situation, we can conclude that it has not” (2005: 41). Parsons (1995) noted that research on policymaking tends to focus on the one-dimensional view.

A key difference between the conceptualisation of power by Foucault when compared with Lukes is the location of power. Foucault viewed power as being local, of the body and something that all people hold. However Lukes’ theory recognised a hierarchical nature of power and the link between power and interests. Unlike Foucault, Lukes does not explicitly limit the location of power to include or exclude particular levels, although his references to institutions and organisations imply that he locates power within the state or other high-level institutions. This results in Lukes’ theory arguably being more useful in the analysis of policy in the UK. The two theories converge, to a degree at least, in relation to the ideological dimension associated with power. Both theorists identified a feature of power whereby those with power reproduce certain ideologies and suppress others so that they can maintain their own power.

In terms of sport in the UK, the government’s power is closely associated with its control of resources. Funding for sport comes from both central and local government. The funds from central government are primarily routed through the non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) UK Sport and the Home Country Sports Councils (in the case of England, Sport England). As the government controls the funding, it can also control the policies that direct the work of these organisations. Another resource at the government’s disposal is human resource, both in terms of administrative capacity in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and within the NDPBs mentioned above, and also access to expertise that can be used to shape and deliver government policy.

Parsons (1995) explored the notion of ‘experts’ in a field and the power that such people can hold in the creation of public policy through two means: firstly the knowledge to define problems to address and secondly in the dissemination of public policy. Parsons described this approach as being peculiar to British and American politics and he also described it as declining in the 1990s due to cost implications of bringing professionals in to consultations on policy. This approach could be observed in the British government in the period 2001-2010 during the Labour government in the form of the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit, which implemented and monitored the priorities of public policy and, in order to achieve this, included 40 people from the public and private sectors. In the case of sport, Sue Campbell, Chair of the Youth
Sport Trust, was appointed as a non-political joint policy advisor to the Minister for Sport and the Minister for Standards within the Department for Education and Employment in 1999 in order to advise on school sport and physical education.

With regards to this study, there is evidence that all three of Lukes’ conceptualisations of power will be of value in providing insights into the process of maintaining stability and managing change in elite sport policy.

### 3.4 Macro-level theories

This section focuses on macro-level theories of power and policy. The five theories that will be explored briefly below are: neo-pluralism, elitism, neo-Marxism, market liberalism and governance. These macro-level theories are the most conventionally used theories in relation to modern policymaking. An examination of these macro-level theories reveals key themes of power and policymaking including how power is conceptualised, what the unit of analysis could be within the theory and how or why policy changes. The key features, criticisms and implications for policymaking are summarised in Table 3.1. These macro-level theories sensitise the researcher to potential approaches for analysing sports policy in the UK and examples of how these theories could be applied to sports policy are explained below. In addition, The macro-level theories are also significant as they underpin the meso-level frameworks that will be explored later in this chapter.
Table 3.1 – Key features, criticisms and implications for sport policymaking of five macro-level theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Criticisms</th>
<th>Implications for sport policymaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neo-pluralism</td>
<td>Focus on the power of groups in policymaking</td>
<td>Does not account for the power of individuals</td>
<td>Policymaking will be influenced by the capitalist system, with business (including media, sponsors and leagues) holding a privileged position. Groups may form networks of interest to gain greater power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The power of groups is not only dependent on resources but also their institutional and historical context.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competition between groups creates change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Power is decentralised and the capacity of leaders to exercise control is constrained.</td>
<td>Implies an absence of democratic legitimacy as decision-making is devolved.</td>
<td>There are lots of groups (for example, NGBs, the British Olympic Association and the Youth Sport Trust, most of which lack features of democratic responsibility, involved in the process of policymaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networks of groups having varying levels of power: the networks are horizontal rather than hierarchical.</td>
<td>Blurs the boundaries of the state, the economy and civil society.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some groups are insiders in terms of having positions of influence and others are outsiders.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elitism</td>
<td>Power is concentrated within a small number of people/groups.</td>
<td>Exaggeration of the unity of those in power.</td>
<td>Policies reinforce the powerful position of the elites, for example the position of the ‘big 5’ NGBs. People with power, even if they are not within the state, will be consulted in the policymaking process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democracy is a mechanism for legitimising elite rule.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy is self-serving and will only change significantly with the demise of elites.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-Marxism</td>
<td>More complex view of class and class relations than traditional Marxism.</td>
<td>Exaggeration of the importance of social class in a more complex modern society.</td>
<td>Policies will serve the interests of the capitalist system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sees the state and its institutions as sites of class conflict rather than simply agents of capitalism.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Liberalism</td>
<td>Small government Favours privatisation Prioritisation of economy</td>
<td>Not sustainable at times of economic uncertainty when greater government control is needed</td>
<td>Policies will serve the interests of business.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using a neo-pluralist approach, the researcher might ask who are the interest groups in sport in the UK, how effective they are and whether they are cohesive. There are interest groups relating to broad areas of sport such as the mass participation agenda, such as the Chief Leisure Officers Association, or the elite sport agenda, such as the British Olympic Association and the British Athletes Commission. Similarly there are interest groups that relate to narrower issues such as regulation of gambling, such as Business In Sport and Leisure, which has a specific working group for gambling. These groups might include people or organisations that operate specifically within sport or have a wider remit. For example, groups campaigning for making cycling safer have included British Cycling, including some of their high profile athletes such as Chris Hoy and Mark Cavendish, organisations such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the media. The question of cohesion can be problematic because of the broad nature of some organisations’ remits, particularly the National Governing Bodies who are responsible for elite sport, mass participation sport and also legal regulations within their sport such as anti-doping. There are clear coalitions of interest within sport in the UK and the interests and activities of such groups can shape policy.

Governance theorists would explain the government’s use of arms-length bodies, namely the NDPBs UK Sport and the Home Country Sports Councils, for the regulation of sport as an approach that ensures decentralised management and decision-making. This approach can be related to Foucault’s notion of governmentality in so far as it could be argued that the government shapes the behaviour of its partners in sport to be self-regulating and effective deliverers of government priorities. With regard to the notion of insiders and outsiders in the policymaking domain, the sports councils and the National Governing Bodies, especially Olympic NGBs, could be seen as insiders with access to decision makers within government through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Organisations such as the Ramblers Association, the Caravan Club and many non-Olympic NGBs could be viewed as outsiders either because the activities and groups that they represent are not seen as “sport”, but rather seen as leisure pursuits and therefore do not fit with the sport remit and policies or they do not support the government’s narrow elite sport ambitions. The networks of organisations in sport in the UK are broad and could be seen to shape policy, as noted above, but the government retains ultimate control of much of the landscape due to the resources it provides and regulations it imposes.
When using elitist theory, the researcher might ask whether there is an elite group within sport policy. Currently there is not an identifiable, stable elite group within sport that influence policymaking but there are certain individuals who have, or have had, privileged access to the decision makers. For example, Sue Campbell has previously held an advisory position for government and is now a cross-bench peer in the House of Lords, thus she is in a strong position to influence policy matters. Other examples of individuals who could be seen as elites include Lord Sebastian Coe, who was the Chairman of the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2012 (LOCOG) and instrumental in London’s successful bid to host the 2017 IAAF World Athletics Championships as well as being appointed an advisor to the Cabinet on Olympic legacy, and Sir Keith Mills, the former Vice-Chair of LOCOG and who was the government appointed chair of the project group that assessed the feasibility of a UK Sport/Sport England merger. While there are a number of influential individuals who could be described as elites, there is a lack of evidence that they constitute a cohesive group that works purposefully together to shape policy.

In 2010, when budgets were cut within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the NDPBs that it funds, a decision was made to increase funding available for UK Sport’s Major Events programme. This could be seen by Neo-Marxists as prioritising one area of sport that is perceived by government to bring financial gains thus protecting and promoting the interests of capitalism. However, whilst funds were added to this specific programme, sport as a whole did not suffer significant cuts when compared with other areas of government spending. In a study of sport and major events in Japan, Horne and Manzenreiter (2004) explored the Japanese government’s agenda of supporting the construction industry as the underpinning of their major events strategy, specifically the hosting of the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Horne and Manzenreiter (2004: 190) stated that “While football stadium construction might not always correspond with popular demand, it certainly did respond to parliamentary demand.” and also noted that this approach protected the construction industry from the worst of the recession that Japan was experiencing at the time. This approach by the government would be viewed by Neo-Marxists as protecting the interests of industry over the interests of the general population of the country.

A market liberal approach would explain the government’s decision to introduce Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT) for management of local leisure services in the late 1980s as a demonstration of the priority of economic interest over quality
of service whilst reducing the size of the public sector staffing need. A further example is the recent decision by Sport England to use a mixed-economy approach to funding participation programmes. CCT was introduced to the leisure sector when the government still had little vision and no direct policy for sport so CCT did not detract from other sport policy options, it was merely part of the overall approach of the government at the time. A further example might be the rise of private health clubs as sites for providing sport, exercise and recreation services as a function of capitalism taking priority in society. This could be explained as the creation of demand for private clubs being caused by a gap in provision of services within the public sector, therefore making the government complicit in the growth of a private sector within sport. Similarly, the growth of after-school sports clubs that require outside expertise in the form of private coaches could be seen as an example of public funds in the education system supporting the growth of private business.

While there would appear to be scant evidence in support of an elite dominated sport policy process, there are elements of the other four macro-level theories that resonate, to some degree at least, with recent policy decisions. Of particular potential value are the theories of neo-pluralism and governance. Market liberalism also has potential for analysis of policy decisions made by Coalition government with regards to the broad sport policy landscape but may hold less weight in relation to elite sport because of the growing public investment in elite sport systems and dependence on this funding by many NGBs.

3.5 Stability and change

A key element in studying policy and one of central relevance to this study, is the analysis of the causes of stability and change. However, defining what constitutes stability and what constitutes change and identifying thresholds can be a challenge for the researcher. A change, such as the withdrawal of funding by UK Sport for a sport's elite programme following poor performance in the Olympic Games, could be perceived differently by the various policy actors involved: for the government and UK Sport, this would represent continuity of policy as they would continue to support successful sports but for the sport that loses its funding this decision could represent significant change. Furthermore for any athletes that had previously been in receipt
of public funding, it could also be a significant change to their life and may result in them retiring from competition.

Hall (1986) described a typology of change that features three levels, or orders, of change, which is of potential value in calibrating change. First-order change is the change to the intensity of an existing policy process or instrument. For example, Sport England increasing or decreasing the funding to an NGB for programmes to improve participation in their sport. Second-order change is change to the policy instrument, or implementation mechanism. For example, Sport England’s decision in January 2014 to change their approach to funding basketball participation programmes with some of the funding going to the NGB and some going to other organisations not affiliated with the NGB that focus on local provision of the sport in order to increase participation. Third-order change is a change to the policy goals. For example, the Coalition government’s policy document *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* focused on people aged 14-25 years and improving participation in sport and physical activity within this demographic whereas previous governments sought an increase in participation across the population, not just a specific age group.

A challenge for the researcher when using Hall’s typology is that the parameters of the three orders of change are not set so change may be interpreted differently. For example, the Coalition government’s decision to remove School Sport Partnerships and introduce specific funding for primary schools could be described as an example of any of the three orders of change. It could be seen as first-order change because the change included a reduction in funding available for school sport but the focus remained the same: to improve quality and quantity of school-based sport. Alternatively the change could be described as second-order because the implementation of the policy has changed from the SSP model to focus on funding for primary schools with no set structure to achieve the goals. Finally, this change could be described as third-order change: a change from prescriptive, central-controlled school policy to the prioritisation of deregulation and local decision-making. The situation with school sport can be described as a third-order change if the policy goal was judged to have changed, although some might argue that the government’s focus remains the same (i.e.: improving school sport) and therefore the goal has not changed. Although Hall’s framework provides a useful tool for examining the intensity of change in policy, it is not unproblematic as the three levels are open to interpretation and could prove to be vague when examining the nuances of policy stability and change in this research.
3.6 Meso-level theories

This section will provide an analysis of five meso-level theories against a set of criteria in order to determine a useful model for the study of stability and change in sport policy. In examinations of meso-level theories of public policymaking, both Houlihan (2005) and Sabatier (2007) outlined criteria against which the research might assess the utility of the theories and frameworks available. Sabatier’s (2007) work examined the analysis of public policy in a very broad sense whereas Houlihan (2005) was writing from the perspective of seeking to establish an appropriate model for analysing sport policy. The criteria that these two researchers used are summarised below in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 – Criteria for selecting appropriate meso-level frameworks for policy analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Houlihan</th>
<th>Sabatier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Able to explain policy stability and policy change</td>
<td>1. Clearly articulated and applicable across a number of political systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Analyses the policy process as a whole, rather than sections of it</td>
<td>2. Applied and deemed viable by policy scholars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Applicable across a number of policy areas</td>
<td>3. Able to explain much of the policy process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Able to examine policy over a time period of at least 5 years</td>
<td>4. Accounts for a broad set of factors in policymaking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Houlihan (2005) and Sabatier (2007).

There are two key areas where the criteria set out by Houlihan (2005) and Sabatier (2007) overlap. The first is that a framework needs to be applicable to the whole policy process, rather than just examining specific elements of the process, such as agenda-setting or policy implementation. This would allow the researcher to carry out a holistic analysis of policymaking process. Secondly, they agree that a framework needs to be applicable to a number of political systems and policy areas. This is important for the study of sport policy because it is a relatively new area of analysis and therefore needs to be able to be put into a wider context of public policymaking and examined in a similarly in-depth manner as other more established academic policy analysis areas.

An important criterion that Houlihan (2005) outlined was that a framework should be able to account for both continuity and change in public policy. Houlihan (2005: 167)
noted “in many, if not most, industrial countries change in sport policy has been rapid”. In the UK, sport became established on the political agenda as recently as the 1960s and there has been significant growth and change since then so it is important for the researcher to be able to examine this fully. As well as explaining change and development of policy, it is important to understand the environment in which policy remains stable. While circumstances such as a change of government or some sort of political or economic crisis would be expected to lead to change, it is also possible for policy to continue on the same path in spite of wider contextual or macro level changes. Similarly, Houlihan’s (2005) criteria relating to the time period is also important to consider as this will allow the researcher to achieve a full analysis over a number of years. A shorter period may give an inaccurate portrayal of the policy environment when a particular change in the policy landscape may have been short-lived. Based on the above, Houlihan’s (2005) criteria will be adopted when examining meso-level frameworks.

The following four frameworks will be examined: the Advocacy Coalition Framework, Punctuated Equilibrium theory, the Multiple Streams Framework and new institutionalism.

3.6.1 The Advocacy Coalition Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) was first theorised by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith in 1988. Sabatier and Weible (2007: 191) stated that the ACF is founded on a “macro-level assumption that most policymaking occurs among specialists within a policy subsystem… affected by factors in the broader political and socioeconomic system”. The ACF, consistent with much neo-pluralist and governance theorising, suggests that within a policy subsystem, for example sport policy, between two and four advocacy coalitions will exist. These coalitions are formed based on mutual beliefs and values relating to a specific policy issue or group of issues and the desire to change policy (Sabatier and Weible, 2007). The coalitions can be formed of people from various agencies including different levels of government. However, they are not exclusively the domain of people in official or elected positions and could include people such as journalists and researchers. Indeed Sabatier and Weible (2007) stated that applications of ACF have found that researchers play active roles in advocacy coalitions. These coalitions then engage in debate and competition and negotiate their positions with these activities often
mediated by a policy broker. The policy broker must be accepted by all coalitions in the subsystem in order to be effective in mediating and must be politically sophisticated in their knowledge and communication. A key aspect of the ACF is that it has a time perspective of at least ten years.

Within the shared beliefs and values of an advocacy coalition, there are three levels of belief. Firstly there are the ‘deep core’ beliefs, which are those that are fundamental to a person’s policy position and are very unlikely to be altered. In the case of sport this may be the importance of equality for people with disabilities or the importance of competitive sport. Secondly there are the ‘policy core’ beliefs which are the “basic normative commitments and causal perceptions” within the subsystem” (Green and Houlihan, 2004: 391). In the case of sport the policy core beliefs could be the priority of sport for all over elite sport development. Finally, there are the ‘secondary aspects’ that are narrower beliefs for example, the distribution of resources within the policy subsystem. In sport policy, secondary aspects might relate to space or facilities available for the practice of sport and how these resources are managed. The boundaries between these levels of beliefs cannot be defined easily. The ACF is seen as a rational model (Houlihan, 2005) because those within a coalition are willing to respond to evidence and expert knowledge that might shape their views as demonstrated with the notion of policy learning. Policy learning often takes place over an extended period of time (Houlihan, 2005) but it is unlikely to affect deep core beliefs.

In addition to the internal machinations of the coalitions, the ACF acknowledges the impact of external influences on the policymaking process. These external factors can be seen as either stable or dynamic. Stable factors are those that are unlikely to change, such as the general constitutional foundation of government or sociocultural values within a society. Within sport, stable factors could be seen as the value placed upon the success of national sports teams or the fact that there is a Ministerial position within the government that is responsible for sport. Dynamic external factors are those more likely to change and could include the general economic conditions or the ruling party in government. Examples in sport policy could include the priorities of funding bodies such as UK Sport or Sport England or the position of sport in the machinery of government. A further dynamic external factor is the overlapping of subsystems and the impact of decisions made within other subsystems. Within sport, a decision made within the education subsystem, for example the removal of ring-
fenced funding for school sport, might impact upon the sport subsystem as sport policy advocacy coalitions seek to incorporate or respond to these changes.

A key challenge when employing the ACF is defining the political subsystem that the researcher is analysing. In the case of sport, this subsystem will overlap with a number of other subsystems such as health, education, youth and land-use planning and some advocacy coalitions will cover more than one of these areas. For example, within a subsystem concerned with youth sport there may be organisations whose central interest is in sport, for example a national governing body that wants to bring young people into its sport, and others whose main concern is education or welfare, for example PE teachers’ groups or charities focused on young people’s rights and safety.

The ACF can be described as a rational model due to the fact that coalitions will respond to evidence to shape their views and actions. A criticism of the framework is that it does not acknowledge the impact of ideas, or other non-evidence-driven influences, on policymaking. Shaw (2010: 201) described the issue as the assumption “that social actors have ‘fixed’ interests and preferences.” There are other frameworks that do acknowledge these factors, although there is a variety of terminology used, including ideas, narratives, storylines and discourses, which broadly describe the same phenomena. The common feature is the importance of social construction of these stories within policymaking. Hajer (1993: 44) expressed that this is a central feature and stated, “It is almost commonplace to state that political problems are socially constructed.”

A further criticism of the ACF, as cited by Fischer (2003), is that policy analysts often treat coalitions as unified bodies, whereas there are often important differences between groups within the same policy subsystem. Advocacy coalitions within the sport policy subsystem may be conceived in a simplistic manner as three separate but internally homogenous groups: elite sport, community participation sport and youth and school sport. However, there may be more coalitions operating with more nuanced differences.

The elite sport policy sub-system could have various advocacy coalitions operating within it. These coalitions could be shaped by the category of sport that they represent, for example Olympic/Paralympic sports and non-Olympic/Paralympic sports. Coalitions could also be shaped by economic situation with commercially
lucrative sports, which in the UK could be seen to include cricket, football and rugby union, grouping together and non-commercial or less commercial sports, such as smaller Olympic sports forming a coalition. Alternatively there could be functional coalitions where the coalition is driven by interest in elite sport but seeks to influence policy on other policy areas. For example, focusing on youth sport to ensure that there are opportunities to identify and develop talent through clubs, schools and other youth organisations.

It is possible to argue that the ACF fulfils all four of the criteria outlined above. Firstly, it successfully explains policy continuity and policy change. However, Houlihan (2005: 174) adds a caveat here that “the reliance on the combination of instrumental rationality and exogenous events is only partially satisfactory”. Secondly it can be used for analysing the whole policy process. Thirdly, research using the ACF has demonstrated that it can be used for analysis in a number of policy areas (Sabatier, 2007) and different geographical contexts. Finally, the ACF fulfils the fourth criteria of examining policy change over a period of at least 5 years, as this is one of the central features of the framework.

However, the criticisms of the ACF that have been outlined, in particular into relation to how coalitions respond to narratives and the social construction of policy issues and solutions, are significant because they highlight the extent to which the ACF is founded on a rational model of decision-making. The approaches cited above which centre around narratives or discourse criticise the rational approach as it overlooks the complexities of the social world and how policymaking is influenced by its context.

The ACF was employed and evaluated by Green and Houlihan (2004) in their study of elite sport policy in the UK and Canada, focusing on two sports (swimming and athletics) in both of the countries. In their conclusions, Green and Houlihan (2004: 400) wrote that the ACF had been “a useful tool for analysing the complex, fluid, multi-layered and often fragmented sport policymaking process.” However, they identified two weaknesses of this framework: firstly that there was no explicit conceptualisation of power within the framework and, secondly, that there was no opportunity to account for the discursive construction of the political world.
3.6.2 Punctuated Equilibrium theory

The Punctuated Equilibrium theory was proposed by Baumgartner and Jones in 1993. They were dissatisfied with previous theories of policymaking that emphasised both the incremental nature of policymaking and the importance of electoral change. Jones and Baumgartner (2012: 1) stated that they “saw policy change as oftentimes disjoint, episodic, and not always predictable.” Whilst accepting that there can be incremental change, punctuated equilibrium theory also explained that policy change can be “subject to more radical phases of policymaking” (Parsons, 1995: 203).

Punctuated Equilibrium theory assumes that policy has long periods of stability that are punctuated by more brief periods of rapid and significant change, followed once again by long periods of stability. Policy remains stable due to a group holding a position of a “policy monopoly” (Birkland, 2005: 228). This is a closed group of influential actors within a subsystem, with the system benefiting the few and allowing them to maintain control. Policy change comes about when a policy monopoly breaks down (Birkland, 2005) or becomes more open (Parsons, 1995). This concept aligns with macro-level elite theory, as explained earlier in this chapter.

When policy changes, there are two elements that interact: how the issues are portrayed, known as the “policy image”, and the institutional context of the issues in question, known as “policy venues” (Parsons, 1995: 204). Following a change in policy, new institutions may be formed and these institutions form the site for a new period of stability and continue the legacy of the policy change, the change does not simply peak and then recede (Parsons, 1995). The timing of policy change is an important element of Punctuated Equilibrium theory as there is an assumption that change can happen at any point when the policy monopoly breaks down, not only at times of electoral change.

Jones and Baumgartner (2012) indicated a similarity between Punctuated Equilibrium and the Advocacy Coalition Framework: the focus on cognitive and emotional influences on decision-making. However, they noted that the ACF focuses on beliefs whereas Punctuated Equilibrium focuses on attention to particular issues. A second similarity that could be argued is that both frameworks have a reliance on information as part of the policy change mechanism: punctuated equilibrium theorises that the flow of information affects decision makers’ attention to a particular
issue, and ACF theorises that information and evidence can shape the policy core beliefs of an advocacy coalition.

Punctuated Equilibrium theory aligns very well with the first criterion outlined above as its purpose is to explain stability and change in policymaking. Jones and Baumgartner (2012: 4) described the theory as “explicitly a theory of policy dynamics”. It also fits with the third criterion as it can be applied across a number of policy areas. Jones and Baumgartner (2012) cited diverse policy concerns such as food safety, smoking and government budgeting as areas where punctuated equilibrium theory has been used. Punctuated Equilibrium theory also fulfils the fourth criterion of examining policy change over time as the periods of stability that are central to the theory could last many years.

The only criterion that the Punctuated Equilibrium theory arguably does not fulfil is the second criterion of examining the whole policy process. The focus of the Punctuated Equilibrium theory is on the point at which policy changes and the conditions that allow change to happen due to an issue coming to the fore. John and Bevan (2012: 89) stated “Punctuations are now recognized as the defining feature of the policy agenda”. If this assertion is used, it could be argued that the most important element of policymaking has been captured using Punctuated Equilibrium theory, and therefore the second criterion holds less weight when assessing the usefulness of Punctuated Equilibrium theory.

The researcher was not able to identify any previous work that had applied Punctuated Equilibrium theory to sport policy. This theory could be used to explain a key change in the government’s attitude to its support for sport. The British government had a longstanding non-interventionist approach to sport: there was a sports minister in government from the 1960s onwards but the government’s involvement in sport was limited and instead the management and development of sport was left to the CCPR, the Sports Councils and the sport NGBs themselves. This stability of approach was punctuated by a series of failings in international sport in the mid 1990s, including very poor results at the 1996 Olympic Games, at which point the government, led by the then Prime Minister John Major, took on a new approach of setting policy for sport, increasing resources available for sport and adjusting the government’s involvement with the Sports Council, including splitting the Sports Council’s England and UK responsibilities in 1996.
3.6.3 The Multiple Streams Framework

The Multiple Streams Framework theorises that there are three streams within the policy process: the politics stream, the policy stream and the problem stream. These three streams run in parallel with no crossover until an event, known as a “window of opportunity” leads to two or more of the streams meeting, which can lead to issues moving on to the agenda, which in turn can lead to policy change. The streams are brought together by political actors, or “policy entrepreneurs”, who take the opportunity to effect change. Zahariadis (2007) noted that the chance of change is greatest when all three of the streams come together.

The political stream includes elements such as the state, and particularly any change in administration, and wider factors such as the national mood or the activities of pressure groups. Administrative change could include general elections that result in a change in political leadership, both in terms of the political party or the Prime Minister, or changes to the personnel in ministerial positions. In 2010, when the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition came to power, there was dramatic change in administration. One effect of this on sport policy was a new Secretary of State for Education who was less supportive of ring-fenced funding for school sport than his predecessor, and therefore school sport became less of a priority for the Department of Education. Government officials monitor national mood and changes in mood can promote certain agendas or problems. Within sport, an example of this could be the disappointing results yielded by the Great Britain and Northern Ireland Olympic team in 1996 that served as a rationale for the government overhauling and giving higher priority to elite sport development. Kingdon (1995: 148) noted that national mood is something that is “palpable to them [government officials] but hardly concrete or specific”, which can be a challenge for policy makers. The activities of pressure groups can indicate either conflict or consensus: if there is consensus amongst interest groups, it can provide a direction of travel for politicians, but if there is conflict, the politicians must seek a balance (Kingdon, 1995).

The policy stream is a set of potential solutions to a problem. Kingdon (1995: 117) described the policy stream as a “policy primeval soup”. The potential solutions are formulated by experts in any given policy area, located both within and outside of the government (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2007) and are shared or presented in a number of fora for consideration. Zahariadis (2007) noted that potential solutions are subject to selection criteria and only a few ideas are ever fully considered. The
selection criteria include technical aspects such as feasibility and cost or whether the solutions fit with the dominant value system of the government (Houlihan, 2005; Zahariadis, 2007). Within sport policy, an issue such as increasing young people’s involvement in sport might be met with ideas including the role of extracurricular sport in schools, offering free activities in local sport and leisure facilities, broadening the PE curriculum, promoting volunteering and leadership or changes to competition structures.

The problem stream is the attributes and status of problems that the government has identified. Issues can be identified as a result of routine monitoring of the landscape by both government and non-government actors but also through a focussing event, which is described by Kingdon (1995: 94) as “a crisis or disaster that comes along to call attention to the problem.” Examples of focusing events include natural disasters or economic collapse. An example within sport could be a high profile sports person testing positive for a banned substance, thus threatening the credibility of his or her sport, or elite sport as a whole, and bringing the issue of performance-enhancing drugs to the fore of political consciousness. As well as explaining how issues are identified and become part of the political agenda, Kingdon (1995) also explained how an issue might cease to be part of the agenda, either because it has been solved or because the conditions or event that brought the issue to the fore may have changed. Birkland (2005) highlighted the focusing event as a key strength of the multiple streams model and he stated that the significance of such events is presented more clearly than in other models and offers an opportunity for analysis of what variables create a more influential focussing event.

The window of opportunity for policy entrepreneurs to couple the three streams can be predictable or unpredictable (Houlihan and Green, 2006; Zahariadis, 2007). An example of a predictable window of opportunity could be a general election. An example of an unpredictable window of opportunity could be a natural disaster or a terrorist attack. Within sport, an example of a predictable window of opportunity could be the four-year funding cycle that Sport England and UK Sport employ for their funding of National Governing Bodies. An example of an unpredictable window of opportunity could be the Lance Armstrong doping scandal and the subsequent issues with the establishment of an independent enquiry to review anti-doping in the cycling. In addition, major events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup could be seen as predictable windows of opportunity because they occur at regular intervals. However, it could be seen as unpredictable because the success or failure
of the national team may influence how open the window is and for how long and therefore the likelihood of change. Crucially, a window of opportunity may be very brief so a policy entrepreneur needs to be able to act quickly and efficiently in order to bring about change (Zahariadis, 2007).

The significance of the policy entrepreneur has been widely noted (Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan and Green, 2006; Sabatier, 2007; Zahariadis, 2007). Policy entrepreneurs were described as being “highly motivated” (Houlihan and Green, 2006: 80) and “power brokers and manipulators of problematic preferences” (Zahariadis, 2007: 74). Zahariadis (2007) went on to note that the most successful policy entrepreneurs are those with access to policy makers, appropriate resources and the skills to bring the three streams together. Sue Campbell could be seen as a policy entrepreneur within sport policy, especially for school sport policy. Major new government initiatives for improving school sport started during the time that Campbell was an advisor to the government. Campbell was able to bring the three streams together by clearly identifying and articulating the problem and proposing solutions that fit with the priorities of the government.

While other frameworks, such as the ACF, are described as being rational models in which structure and reason are central, the Multiple Streams Framework is more related to “the role of agency, happenstance and opportunism” (Houlihan and Green, 2006: 79) and also “challenges the assumption of deeply entrenched institutionalized interests” (Houlihan, 2005: 172). Sabatier (2007) highlighted this as a potential weakness as it affects clarity and consistency of the framework because elements of the Multiple Streams Framework such as national mood may be difficult to identify and measure.

In terms of relating the Multiple Streams Framework to the criteria set out above, it fulfils the third and fourth criteria, partially fulfils the first criterion, but does not address the second criterion. The third criterion, that the framework should be applicable across a number of policy areas, is fulfilled by the Multiple Streams Framework as it has been used across a wide number of policy study areas (Sabatier, 2007), including the study of sport policy, as noted by Houlihan (2005). The Multiple Streams Framework also responds to the fourth criterion that the framework should be useful for studying policy over a period of time. Houlihan (2005) noted that the timeframe of change was not an explicit part of the framework but its structure allows for this condition to be met. Although this framework only fully meets
two of the four criteria, it remains a useful tool for examining changes to sport policy. The concept of a policy entrepreneur is particularly pertinent in the British sport policy landscape and the concept of a window of opportunity is a relevant one in the exploration of policy change.

The first criterion, that the framework should be able to explain both stability and change is partially fulfilled by the Multiple Streams Framework because the framework only focuses on conditions that retain stability and the circumstances under which change comes about but there is little depth of explanation about the process of change. However, this framework does not fulfil the second criterion, that it should be possible to study the whole policy process. Birkland (2005) described a criticism made by Sabatier that the framework does not examine change that happens beyond the window of opportunity. Similarly, Houlihan (2005) noted that the framework focuses primarily on agenda setting and addresses other parts of the policy process less thoroughly.

3.6.4 New Institutionalism

Analysis of policymaking can be undertaken through the study of institutions because the state can be seen as being made up of different institutions (Dryzek and Dunleavy 2009; Kingdon, 1995). Steinmo (2001) and Cairney (2012) stated the importance of understanding institutional context in order to understand policy. Before addressing the details of New Institutionalism, it is important to define what is meant by the term ‘institution’. An institution can be either a structural entity or a set of cultural norms. Dryzek and Dunleavy (2009: 2) stated that institutions vary “from simple conventions (such as ‘being honest’ or ‘promising’) through to formal organisations (such as government bureaucracies) and complex bodies of rules (such as legal systems).” So institutions can be specific groups or organisations or can be seen as sets of values or norms that have become ingrained, or ‘institutionalised’ in a particular context.

New Institutionalism focuses more on rules and norms than formal structures or “bricks-and-mortar institutions” (Cairney, 2012: 70). Fischer (2003: 29) stated that New Institutionalists “seek to show how institutions actually structure the play of power, often in ways hidden from view”, which links to Lukes’ second and third dimensions of power. However, New Institutionalism is not a “unified body of thought”
According to Hall and Taylor (1996), it offers three models for analysis, which are all quite distinct from each other: namely Sociological Institutionalism, Historical Institutionalism and Rational Choice Institutionalism. All of these models seek to explain the role that institutions of different types play in influencing policy outcomes (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Powell (2007) stated that this set of theories focuses on the meso-level of politics and how different sub-sectors are influenced and how influence is exercised. Hall and Taylor (1996: 955) stated “it is striking how distant these schools of thought have remained from each other” and they proposed greater exchange and overlap in order to highlight common ground between the different versions of New Institutionalism. The researcher was not able to find any examples of the three versions of New Institutionalism applied to sport policy analysis so some examples of how the models could be applied will be included in the explanation that follows.

Sociological Institutionalism incorporates a broad definition of institutions to include both formal rules and cultural norms. Social construction is central to this theory. The institution’s norms shape the interactions of individuals within the institution and the environment shapes the institutions themselves. Hall and Taylor (1996) stated that Sociological Institutionalism has been applied by examining similarities between nations, despite local conditions, and they gave the example of similarities between Education Ministries. This transnational application could also be used in sport where most of the countries in the world send teams to the Summer Olympic Games, despite vast differences in local social, political and economic conditions: the idea of the country being represented on a world stage and being a member of an international organisation is of value.

Historical Institutionalism describes institutions as important variables in the explanation of political outcomes (Steinmo, 2001). This theory acknowledges that it is not just current activities that affect an outcome but also the historical context and the situation that has been inherited. Cairney (2012) highlighted three key concepts within historical institutionalism: historical contingency, path dependence and critical juncture. Historical contingency is “the extent to which events and decisions made in the past contributed to the formation of institutions that influence current practice” (Cairney, 2012: 76). In sport policy, the historical contingency may include decisions made by John Major’s Conservative government and subsequent Labour governments in relation to the practices of sports organisation in the current political climate. Path dependence suggests that once a critical policy decision has been
made and a policy direction established, it is likely that policy will continue in that
direction because policy decisions accumulate over time (Kay, 2005). It is too
simplistic to state that past decisions determine future policy direction but policy
choices can be considerably limited once the path dependence is established as it
can be difficult to step off the ‘path’ (Houlihan and Lindsey, 2013; Kay, 2005). Sydow,
Schreyögg and Koch (2005) stated that the self-reinforcing nature of path
dependence can be attributed to social factors, in particular the preferences and
knowledge of actors within the field. This assertion reflects both Foucault and Lukes’
concepts of power being reproduced by the values and ideologies of those who hold
power. Furthermore, the idea of dominant institutions constraining future decisions
through path dependency links to the Lukes’ second dimension of power and the
notion of non-decisions. Institutions are part of path dependency because of their
continuity: there is rarely significant change within institutions. Salisbury (2011)
analysed the emergence of a strategy for hosting of major sports events in the UK
and concluded that it can be explained at least in part with reference to path
dependency. Finally, a critical juncture is “the point at which certain events and
decisions were made which led to the development of an institution” (Cairney, 2012:
76). Within sport policy in the UK, the decision to split the Sports Council into two
organisations with responsibility for England and the UK provided an environment for
more systematic approaches to elite sport by the new UK Sports Council and
associated organisation.

Sydow et al (2005) described three phases of the development of path dependency:
the preformation phase, path formation and path dependence (see figure 3.2). The
first phase, preformation, is described as an “open search process” (Sydow et al,
2005: 8) at which point choices are not constrained. At phase two, options have
become narrowed due to the decisions made during phase one and at the point of
the critical juncture. During phase two self-reinforcing processes can be observed,
although this emerging path is potentially still reversible. Phase three is path
dependence at which point alternative options to the path cease to be feasible as the
path has been ‘locked-in’.
Figure 3.1 – The classical model of path dependency

Rational Choice Institutionalism assumes that logic and instrumental motives determine the interactions of an individual, and that this logic can be drawn from an institution. Hall and Taylor (1996) explained that an individual will face a dilemma of choosing between individual or collective gain and if the institution lacks structure then the individual will prioritise their personal gain, as there is no assurance that others will act with them to achieve a collectively valued outcome. Within track and field athletics, an athlete may have the opportunity to compete in potentially lucrative commercial competitions where they are essentially competing as an individual. However, this may not complement their preparations for major championships where they would gain less financial reward but would be competing for their country, which may be seen as more prestigious and may bring additional gains to their national team or even their country.

A key strength of institutional approaches is the attention paid to the importance of values, rules, norms and ideas. This emphasis responds to a key criticism of rational models such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework, which do not account for these less-observable nuances in the policymaking process. A further strength is that there is a clear conception of power within the approach, particularly in relation to Lukes’ second and third dimensions of power and also connection with macro-level theories as there is a clear relationship between institutional approaches and neo-pluralism, as argued by Houlihan and Lindsey (2013).

When evaluating New Institutionalism against the four criteria for determining a useful framework for analysis, it meets three of the four criteria. This model fulfils the first, third and fourth criteria but does not fulfil the second criterion. New
Institutionalism fulfils the first criterion, that the model can explain both stability and change, although it primarily explains stability: stability is explained by the very nature of institutions as continuous but there is not a strong argument for how they effect change. The three sub-models of New Institutionalism explain interactions, and how the institution shapes these, which would be part of the process of change but Steinmo (2001) stated that there is no theory as to how and why institutions change. Within the explanation of Historical Institutionalism, Hall and Taylor (1996) stated that only substantial institutional change creates drastic shifting in the policy path but that such change to the institution is rare and only brought about in instances of economic crisis and war.

New Institutionalism fulfils the third criterion of being applicable to a wide range of policy areas. Within the literature, examples such as education (Hall and Taylor, 1996) and health (Steinmo, 2001) are given, and Hall and Taylor (1996) also cited examples of comparative analysis. The models of New Institutionalism also fulfil the fourth criterion of being applicable to a time period of 5 years or more. However, this is similar to the fulfilment of the first criterion as this is implied through the explanation of institutions as showing a high degree of continuity. New Institutionalism does not fulfil the second criterion, that a framework should be able to explain the whole policy process, but it provides useful models for explaining structure and interactions that influence policymaking, how it remains stable and how and why changes do or do not occur.

### 3.7 Conclusion

The five sets of concepts and theories considered in this chapter provide the researcher with key theoretical considerations that will inform the approach to the collection and analysis of data.

The exploration of the term policy in this chapter provides a basis for defining the scope of this empirical study. The definition of policy consists of elements relating to state direction and resourcing, and structures including both central government and other public institutions and informs the definition of the policy landscape adopted for this study that can be described as a combination of financial resource, organisational structures and programmes and political salience, meaning the level and location of interest from government.
The examination of two key theories of power as proposed by Foucault and Lukes provided a foundation for the study of macro- and meso-level theories of policymaking. The links between power and the control of resources and access to expertise can be examined within sport policymaking in the UK and these considerations provide important context for this study. Lukes’ second and third dimensions of power provide useful concepts for analysis of policy. The focus of the second dimension of power on non-decisions by those who hold power could be crucial in understanding stability and change. The third dimension of power focuses on latent forces that are not necessarily observable but can affect policy stability, such as myths and values, which are important to acknowledge, especially in the absence of concrete evidence informing policymaking. However, it is acknowledged that this form of power can be difficult to study. In addition, Foucault’s notion of governmentality could also be considered, especially in the context of theorising the Labour government’s modernisation agenda, as highlighted by Houlihan and Green (2009).

The macro-level theories considered within this chapter sensitise the researcher to common themes to consider when examining policymaking. Neo-pluralism offers the greatest potential as a basis for analysis of elite sport policy in the UK because it links power to interest at the individual, organisational and structural levels and it sees policy as the result of competition between interests. Neo-pluralism has a long history of application in analysis of UK policy and its assumptions underpin a number of meso-level frameworks. Governance as a macro-level theory is also potentially of value to this research because it complements many neo-pluralist assumptions and the notions of decentralisation and the importance of networks resonates with structures within the sport policy landscape.

The challenge of defining stability and change within policymaking is important for the researcher to consider as change can be subjective and understood and experienced differently by different groups within the policy context. Hall’s (1986) typology of change offers a useful tool for examining change and will be used in the analysis of data in this research.

The meso-level theories outlined in this chapter provide potential analytical frameworks for the researcher to consider, this time on a more practical level. For example, the interaction between individuals and groups, the positioning of values
and beliefs and the use of expertise and evidence for making informed decisions are common themes within the five meso-level theories described. The frameworks considered can also contribute to the understanding of stability and change.

Of the five meso-level theories examined in this chapter, the Advocacy Coalition Framework is a strong option when measured against the four criteria. However, the absence of consideration of discursive and less-observable factors such as ideas and beliefs as part of the policy process is an issue as policymaking is not always the rational process that the ACF portrays. New Institutionalism also provides a strong option based on the four criteria, although it is not necessarily applicable to the whole policy process. It is a much less used option in analysis of policy compared with the ACF but early interviews conducted as part of the analysis of the policy process implied the importance of values and ideas and how these are constructed and shared within sport in the UK, as well as the more formal structures and institutions therein, and therefore a New Institutionalism approach will be used to guide the data collection and analysis for this research. In addition to the institutionalist framework, elements of the Multiple Streams Framework and Punctuated Equilibrium also provide useful lenses through which to view elite sport policy. In particular, the political stream and the notions of mood and political preferences within the Multiple Streams Framework and elements including the conditions surrounding a punctuation and period of change in policy from Punctuated Equilibrium should be considered.

While there is significant support for and potential within the use of institutional approaches to policy analysis, examples within sport policy analysis remain few. Houlihan and Lindsey (2013: 17) acknowledged the importance of understanding institutions in the context of sport policy and proposed the question, “To what extent and in what circumstances do institutions matter?” This question provides an interesting point of departure for investigation in this research and it was proposed that the researcher would take an institutional approach to analysing stability and change in elite sport policy in the UK.
Chapter 4 – Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the building blocks of research philosophy and to outline the methods to be adopted for this study. The structure of the chapter will be guided by the logical process of research as proposed by Grix (2010a): ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and sources, or samples. Grix (2010a: 57) described ontology and epistemology as “the foundations” of research. Grix (2010a) also highlighted that the concepts are often confused or combined into one discussion, and also that some scholars state that there is no logical sequence for considering them within the research process, something that Grix. Hay’s (2007) view of the logic of examining ontology before epistemology aligns with Grix’s view. Furlong and Marsh (2010: 184) stated “Each social scientist’s orientation to his or her subject is shaped by his/her ontological and epistemological position” and they also highlighted that there must be sound logic linking the ontology and epistemology.

These concepts will be examined in order to establish their meanings and also to explore some of the ontologies and epistemologies that the researcher may consider. The researcher’s ontology and epistemology underpin the methodology, which in turn influences the research design and method that the researcher will adopt for the study. Finally, the methods and sources that are selected will be described and evaluated.

Within this chapter, it is important to bear in mind the aims and objectives of the study, which are as follows:

Aim:
An analysis of public policy stability and change in the landscape of England/UK elite sport since 2005

Objectives:
1. To identify the key elements of the elite sport policy landscape
2. To trace the emergence of talent identification and development and elite sport success as priorities of sport policy
3. To identify the impact on the elite sport policy landscape of the financial crisis, which began in 2008 and the change of government in 2010
4.2 Ontology

Grix (2010a: 59) described ontology as “the starting point of all research”. Ontology is the philosophy of reality and within research is taken to mean the researcher’s assumptions about reality and what can be studied. Bryman (2001) and Grix (2010a) identified two contrasting ontologies: objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism assumes that something can exist and have its own meaning separately from social actors and their influence (Bryman, 2001). Conversely, constructionism assumes that social interaction is responsible for creating meaning and this meaning is constantly being revised. Parsons (2010: 80) stated that social constructs are formed due to “ideas, beliefs, norms, identities, or some other interpretive filter through which people perceive the world”. Crotty (1998) described the essence of objectivism as being that reality exists separately from consciousness, while constructionism assumes that truth comes from human engagement with the world. Bryman (2001) used the example of an organisation in order to illustrate the differences between the two positions. Objectivism sees an organisation as a “tangible object” and something that has “a reality that is external to the individuals who inhabit it” (Bryman, 2001: 17). However, constructionism would view an organisation as being defined and changed by the people within it (Bryman, 2001).

4.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is the philosophy of “how we come to know what we know” (Grix, 2010a: 63). Bryman (2001: 11) added that an epistemological issue is “the question of what is (or should be) acceptable knowledge in a discipline”. Blaikie (1993: 7) noted that epistemology is a theory of “what can be known, and what criteria such knowledge must satisfy in order to be called knowledge rather than beliefs.” So the fundamental points to consider are what knowledge is and how it can be acquired. Grix (2010b: 459) noted “In real world research there are gradations between positions” so although extreme positions may be most widely cited in the literature, they should be thought of in terms of a continuum and at the point of application to research, the extreme positions may become harder or softer. When exploring epistemology, it is important to consider the position of the researcher in the research process as they can influence what is known.
As with ontology, there are a number of epistemologies that may be relevant to research. Grix (2010a) highlighted two opposing epistemological approaches: foundationalism and anti-foundationalism. Foundationalism focuses on explanation of phenomena while anti-foundationalism focuses on understanding (Grix, 2010a). While these two epistemologies can be viewed as being at opposite ends of a continuum, Grix (2010a) described Weber’s position as sitting between these two epistemologies as ‘explanatory understanding’. A foundationalist approach assumes that knowledge of unquestionable truths can be found through research and that “reality is thought to exist independently of our knowledge of it” (Grix, 2010a: 64). Anti-foundationalism takes an opposing view and is based on the assumption that social interaction shapes the world and reality “has no social role /casual power independent of the agent’s/group’s/society’s understanding of it” (Furlong and Marsh, 2010: 191).

Walliman (2006) described two theories of gathering knowledge: empiricism and rationalism. Walliman (2006: 15) described empiricism as being concerned with “knowledge gained by sensory experience”, compared with “rationalism” which is concerned with “knowledge gained by reasoning”. Empiricism is based on the notion that “there are ‘facts’ which we can gather on the social world, independently of how people interpret them” (May, 2011: 10 – italics in original). Furthermore, there is a detachment from theory and an assumption that a fact that is real and observable is sufficient without a theory to support it. This epistemology views the researcher as being detached from the social world and able to achieve objective research through the use of appropriate, accurate tools (May, 2011).

Blaikie (1993: 94) described rationalism as “an epistemology in which the direct examination of thought is the only path to knowledge of the real world” and also stated “behind the world that can be observed lies a world of thought”. Blaikie (1993) purposely excluded rationalism from his in-depth discussion of research traditions as he viewed it as being of little use for social research. Rationalism is based on ontology that reality is not observable.

4.4 Paradigms

The terms ‘method’ and ‘methodology’ are often confused or used interchangeably (Blaikie, 1993; Grix, 2010a). The methodology is informed by the ontology and
epistemology and relates to the approach that the researcher takes in carrying out the research (Grix, 2010a). Blaikie (1993: 7) described methodology as “the analysis of how research should or does proceed” and noted that it concerns the relationship between theory and research. Bailey (1994: 34) stated that the assumptions and values that the researcher formulates “serve as rationale for research and the standards or criteria the researcher uses for interpreting data and reaching conclusions.” Conversely, the research methods are the techniques and tools that a researcher employs in order to gather data (Blaikie, 1993).

A paradigm, often called a research tradition, has been described as a model for research within a specific discipline (Grix, 2010a) and also “the mental window through which the researcher views the world” (Bailey, 1994: 26). The major paradigms of positivism, post-positivism and interpretivism can be seen as being on a continuum (see figure 4.2) as they do not tend to be defined in absolute terms. Grix (2010a: 77) describes these three paradigms as “broad headings” under which “many ‘families’ of research strands are gathered.”

![Figure 4.1 – Continuum of paradigms](source)

Positivism assumes that only that which can be observed by human senses can be real and therefore studied. Objectivity is a crucial element of positivism as the epistemological viewpoint is that reality can only be confirmed by the sense and knowledge must be free from social values. A desired outcome of research, according to positivism, is to be able to make causal statements, including being able to explain human behaviour through cause and effect (May, 2011). The objective nature of positivism locates the researcher, and the methods that they employ, as being neutral in the research process. Historically, positivism has been associated with the natural sciences as the conditions of positivism can be achieved through laboratory-based research but there are also those who seek to apply it to social sciences. On a practical level, this means that the researcher takes the approach of using theory to form a hypothesis and then testing the hypothesis by gathering data.
Through this approach, the positivist researcher seeks to establish rules within the complex social world in order to make it more understandable.

The attempts to simplify the complex social world through a positivist approach have been one of the key criticisms of positivism. Part of this criticism has been the crucial point that there is a fundamental difference between natural and social phenomena so there are issues in trying to examine them in the same way (Blaikie, 1993; Furlong and Marsh, 2010). Furlong and Marsh (2010: 195) provided a further criticism of positivism: if one assumes that everything is open to interpretation, including that which we experience through our senses and they stated “there is no way of classifying, or even describing, experience without interpreting it.”

Interpretivism is more concerned with understanding a phenomenon, rather than explaining it through cause and effect, and focuses upon the subjective meaning of social action. It is aligned with the anti-foundationalist epistemology described above (Grix, 2010a). Blaikie (1993) cited Weber, Schütz and Winch as the pioneering theorists of interpretivism. Grix (2010a: 83) stated that interpretivism developed as a response to the “over-dominance of positivism” and that the natural sciences and social sciences are fundamentally different and therefore require different theoretical and practical approaches. The interpretivist paradigm views the researcher as being a part of the research as he or she is “part of the social reality being researched” (Grix, 2010a: 84) and therefore objectivity is hard to achieve.

Key criticisms of interpretivism are the lack of objectivity that can be achieved and the degree of uncertainty in conclusions that are drawn due to the process of interpretation, and therefore the issue of how valid the research is. Blaikie (1993) cited Weber as being particularly concerned with issues of validity within interpretivism. As Furlong and Marsh (2010: 200) stated, there is a view that “the interpretivist tradition merely offers opinions or subjective judgements about the world” and therefore there lacks a solid basis for validity.

Lying between positivism and interpretivism on the continuum is post-positivism. Post-positivism is also referred to as critical realism (Grix, 2010a). This paradigm takes elements of both positivism and interpretivism in that it identifies reality as being objective but does not take a full positivist stance of knowledge always being absolute.
4.4.1 Critical Realism

Critical realism is a paradigm that lends itself to the study of policymaking due to its acknowledgement of complex structures and different levels of experience and knowledge. The nature of the elite sport policy landscape and the expectation that the data gathered in the research will indicate differing levels of stability and change within the system require a depth of understanding that the post-positivist position proposes. Furthermore, the use of frameworks that acknowledge the influence of ideas, norms and values that may not be explicitly manifest within the system suggests that differing levels of events and experiences, including those that are unobservable, will be important within the research.

May (2011) stated that ‘critical realism’ is often incorrectly cited as being synonymous with ‘realism’. Realism is aligned with positivism to a certain extent because of its focus on explanation within research. However, it is not limited to the observable being the only reality but instead focuses on underlying mechanisms (May, 2011). The initial development of critical realism is credited to Roy Bhaskar (Baert, 2005; Grix, 2010a; Houston, 2001), although Easton (2010) credited Sayer’s work as being crucial to the further understanding of this paradigm. Easton (2010) cited a number of academic areas where critical realism has been used, including economics, sociology and criminology and Baert (2005) offered an example of how critical realism has been applied to the examination of British politics.

Like interpretivism, critical realism rejects the positivist position of explanation through cause and effect and instead seeks to understand meaning (Sayer, 2000). Rather than focusing on cause and effect, critical realism points to the notion of various mechanisms producing tendencies, rather than predictable outcomes leading to statements of laws (Houston, 2001; Sayer 2000). However, critical realism does not limit itself to the constructionist ontology that social beings are constructing and being constructed by the world around them, but rather acknowledges the importance of theory for understanding and explanation, especially with regards to structures. The critical realist’s ontological view is that a social reality exists and that the epistemological position is that the researcher is able to access this social reality (Baert, 2005).

Houston (2001) and Baert (2005) explained Bhaskar’s three levels of reality that are considered by critical realism. These three levels are: 1. Empirical – experienced
events and perceptions of these events; 2. Actual - All events, whether experienced or not; 3. Causal or real – mechanisms that generate events. Sayer (2000: 12) expanded this with an explanation that the empirical may not depend on an event being observable and he stated “Observability may make us more confident about what we think exists, but existence itself is not dependent on it.” Sayer (2000) also provided further explanation of the actual: it is linked to the exercising of power and the results of this exercise of power. Baert (2005: 93) stated that the social reality of causal mechanisms and structures exist “beneath the observable surface” and that the social researcher must try to determine the nature and form of this reality.

Causation is identified as “one of the most distinctive features of realism” (Sayer, 2000: 13) and also as “central and unique” to Bhaskar’s work on critical realism (Houston, 2001: 850). As the social world is open, and cannot be replicated in a controlled environment as can be achieved in the natural sciences, there can be different outcomes from one cause and Grix (2010a) noted that critical realists do not see causes in as straightforward a way as positivists. Baert (2005: 94) stated that critical realists abandon “the postulate of symmetry between explanation and prediction” because although explanation can be found, it does not necessarily follow that laws can therefore be uncovered in order to predict future outcomes. This does not mean that a causal mechanism always brings about different results (Sayer, 2000) but there can be identifiable tendencies that a mechanism brings about (Houston, 2001). Sayer (2000) stated, “Explanation depends instead on identifying causal mechanisms and how they work, and discovering if they have been activated and under what conditions.” Houston (2001) also noted that a person’s actions can be influenced by both internal and external factors thus stressing the potentially complex and varied nature of causal mechanisms.

Easton (2010: 120) highlighted the assumption within critical realism about communication of knowledge: “the nature of language and the way we communicate are not incidental to what is known and communicated. Awareness of these relationships is vital in evaluating knowledge.” This is an important point for the researcher to consider when evaluating and selecting an appropriate research design, methods of data collection and process of analysis. Furthermore, Sayer (2000: 15) described a potential issue in the process of data analysis that “when looking back at changes and explaining them, it is easy to imagine that what did happen was always the only thing that could have happened: hindsight can
sometimes be of dubious benefit." So it is important for a researcher to continuously consider that the social world is open and outcomes are not pre-determined.

The critical realist approach is appropriate for studying sport policy because of the combined emphasis of the real and observable existence of social structures and also the underlying mechanisms that operate to bring about certain outcomes. This is pertinent within the policy landscape of sport where there are a variety of organisations and individuals operating within a multi-layered system of politics and governance and an underlying, often intangible, set of values, beliefs and priorities that influence decisions, action and inaction. Consequently a critical realist position will be used to inform the design of this study.

4.5 Research design

The research design, or research strategy, is the overall approach that a researcher takes and includes both the collection and analysis of the data (Bryman, 2001; Yin, 2003). When deciding upon a research strategy, the researcher should consider elements such as the level of analysis that they are to undertake and the sources of data that they will access (Grix, 2010a; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) suggested three elements that the researcher should consider when deciding upon their research strategy: the nature of the research questions, the level of control that the researcher has over the phenomena to be studied and whether they are studying something contemporary or historical. In the case of this research, the nature of the research questions are qualitative questions seeking to understand the context of policymaking, stability and change, the researcher has no control over the phenomena but can seek to control the sample that is studied and the context is contemporary rather than historical.

The proposed research design is a case study approach and the researcher will examine three closely inter-related case studies within elite sport policy in the UK: talent identification, talent development and maintenance of elite performance. These three case studies have been selected because they reflect a conventional discussion of the elite sport development process. Bloom (1985) described a three-level process of development: initiation, where the person is identified as talented; development, when time and effort dedicated to training increases significantly; and perfection, when the athlete reaches their peak. This division is evident in the World
Class Performance Programme (WCPP), which is managed and funded through UK Sport, and therefore reflects the structure of investment in elite sport in the UK at the current time. The WCPP refers to the three levels of elite sport as Talent, Development and Podium. This terminology will not be used in the case study titles because this research is not exclusively about the UK Sport programme, as it will examine other agencies and non-Olympic sports.

All three cases are intertwined and are often collectively referred to as ‘elite sport’ but there has already been a degree of separation of the three cases as elite sport policy has developed in the UK, as outlined in chapter 2. Historically, talent identification has not had a single lead agency and while this remains the case at present, with UK Sport, Sport England and Youth Sport Trust all funding programmes aimed at this area of elite sport, there has been a steady development of a systematic approach. Similarly, talent development has been fragmented in the past but the development of the UK Sport/EIS UK Talent Team programme has shown a significant shift in prioritisation of talent development with specific resourcing attached. Elite performance refers to the highest level of competitive sport and how those athletes are supported in order to maintain their level of performance.

Elite sport has been a specific part of the government sport policy agenda since John Major’s government in the 1990s but the development of structures of public funding and policymaking have made the three cases more distinct. Although the focus for analysis in the case studies will be on the contemporary context, the analysis will take into account the temporal aspects of the emergence and development of the policy priorities.

### 4.5.1 Case studies

A case study is described as being a research strategy that seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon in a specific context (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). Yin (2003: 4) went on to state that a case study could allow a researcher “to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life” while Eisenhardt (1989: 534) noted that it allows a focus upon “dynamics” within the case. Grix (2010a: 51) also highlighted the importance of context and stated that a case study approach allows the researcher to “identify, uncover and unpick specific contextual factors in which the event, person or policy you are analysing is embedded.”
Yin (2003) stated that case studies have been used in diverse research areas including psychology, political science and community planning. Easton (2010: 123) described a critical realist case study approach as being “particularly well suited to relatively clearly bounded, but complex, phenomena” and cited the example of organisations and inter-organisational relationships, a premise that could also apply to the complex sport policy landscape. A case study approach is appropriate when researching “contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated” (Yin, 2003: 7), which is precisely the condition of the policy landscape that is to be researched in this study.

There are three types of case study described in the literature, which are summarised in Table 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of case study</th>
<th>Purpose or objective of case study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory</td>
<td>A basis for explanation and generalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>A test of a hypothesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>A detailed, historical account of the case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Grix (2010a) and Yin (2003)

A case study research strategy has implications for the sample and data collection. Easton (2010) noted that within a case study the boundaries of the study must be defined but that these boundaries can be re-defined over the course of the research. The researcher may find that a wider scope is required or indeed their original definition of scope is too wide and some subjects not relevant. One element to consider when deciding upon the sample is that the case study lends itself to the researcher carrying out “multiple levels of analysis within a single study” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 534) so the sample does not have to be limited. Easton (2010: 124) stated “case research is essentially eclectic with respect to the kinds of data that might be collected.” and similarly Eisenhardt (1989) highlighted that data collection methods in a case study approach can be qualitative, quantitative or both.

Yin (2003) noted three common criticisms of the case study research strategy. Firstly, it is argued that case studies can lack rigour as the methods employed are less prescriptive and less widely written about than approaches such as experiments
therefore it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the methods chosen in the case study are used rigorously. Secondly, the case study is seen as not providing an opportunity for generalisation. Yin (2003) countered this criticism by pointing out that case studies can be used for generalisation if they are related to theory but he accepted that they are not usually used for generalising in a statistical manner. This study is informed by a critical realist approach and as such the aim is not necessarily to produce generalisations but rather to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject matter and the underlying mechanisms present. The third criticism of the case study approach is the time taken to conduct the research and the volume of material that the approach can produce. In addition, Grix (2010a) offered a warning to researchers: he noted that researchers can become immersed in the specifics of the case that they are examining and fail to relate it to the other work in the field.

4.6 Approaches to data collection

The methods that a researcher selects and the nature of data collected for research can be qualitative, quantitative or a mixture of both. Quantitative research tends to be theory-driven and focuses upon numerical data that can lead to making generalisations or predicting outcomes (Bryman, 2001; Grix, 2010a). Qualitative research focuses more upon the in-depth understanding of the meaning of a phenomenon and there is an element of interaction between the researcher and the data (Grix, 2010a). While qualitative research is usually seen as the opposite of quantitative research (Grix, 2010a), some researchers seek to combine the two within one study, which is known as a mixed methods approach.

Sayer (2000:19) stated “compared to positivism and interpretivism, critical realism endorses or is compatible with a relatively wide range of research methods, but it implies that the particular choices should depend on the nature of the object of study and what one wants to learn about it”. Both quantitative and qualitative methods should be considered by the researcher but the choice of which approach to take and therefore the techniques used in data collection should depend on the research questions.

4.6.1 Quantitative methods
Grix (2010a: 117) stated that quantitative research has three phases: “finding variables for concepts, operationalising them, and measuring them”. Within quantitative research methods the researcher has the ability to control the environment and make it more closed (or completely closed) so that they can focus upon specific variables. The process of analysis of quantitative data usually employs statistical approaches in order to draw conclusions. Quantitative research methods are often associated with a positivistic paradigm (Bryman, 2001), although positivism is not limited to quantitative methods or vice versa. Like positivism, the nature of quantitative research stresses the aim of achieving objective outcomes. Quantitative researchers stress the importance of research being replicable and therefore verifiable and thus considered legitimate and reliable (Grix, 2010a).

There are certain phenomena that a researcher may wish to examine that cannot be studied in a quantitative manner because they cannot be controlled. Grix (2010a: 119) stated, “behavioural phenomena are difficult to capture or ‘measure’ quantitatively”. This is cited as a key criticism of quantitative approaches (Grix, 2010a). A second criticism of quantitative methods and data analysis has been that it lacks the depth of understanding of phenomena and reduces it to a cause and effect or correlation relationship.

4.6.2 Qualitative methods

Grix (2010a: 120) described qualitative research methods as those that involve “in-depth investigation”. Methods and techniques used in qualitative research may include interviews, document analysis and ethnographic studies. Qualitative research is usually aligned to an interpretivist paradigm, rather than a positivist paradigm like quantitative methods. A crucial element of qualitative research, and one that allows the researcher to access the in-depth data, is the consideration of social context and the views of people within that context (Grix, 2010a). Bryman (2001: 264) stated that qualitative research is “the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants”.

However, this flexibility and the interpretive nature of qualitative research have led to criticism. Bryman (2001) stated that quantitative research has a clear process attached whereas qualitative research, seeing as it is flexible, can be perceived to be less clear in its approach. Similarly, the more flexible approach also means that
qualitative research is less likely to be replicable, which brings in questions of reliability. A further criticism of qualitative research is that the data is interpreted and analysed by the researcher, thus making the results less objective than if quantitative methods were employed.

4.6.3 Mixed methods

An alternative view on research methods is to break down the division between quantitative and qualitative methods and instead opt for a mixture of methods that may take in both qualitative and quantitative (Bryman, 2001). Grix (2010a) described the notion of triangulation as meaning that the researcher could combine different methods of investigation. The benefits of combining more than one method of data collection include being able to secure more reliable data and reduce bias (Grix, 2010a). Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil (2002: 46) noted that a mixed methods approach is useful when “the complexity of phenomena requires data from a large number of perspectives”.

A crucial consideration in mixed methods research is whether the methods that the researcher decides to use are appropriate to the data that is being sought to answer the research question and whether the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions are consistent with the methods that they are employing.

The approach that will be taken in this research is a qualitative approach as this is most appropriate for collecting data for the case study approach and to achieve the aims and objectives of the research.

4.7 Methods for data collection and analysis

The proposed methods of data collection for this study are interviews and document analysis. Yin (2003) stated that using more than one source of data is an essential consideration in case study research. Indeed Richards (1996) stated that interviews can help in the interpretation of documents, as the researcher can understand more about the people responsible for the publications. These qualitative data collection techniques will be supplemented by secondary quantitative data. The data that will be used will be taken from public documents and will include information such as
public funding granted through the National Lottery and government exchequer and information on the achievements of British athletes at various levels.

However, the use of quantitative data should not be seen as an attempt to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods, or a privileging of quantitative data. The purpose of using quantitative data is threefold. Firstly, to understand the context of sport policy delivery in terms of finances and also the data that has been collected relating to policy outcomes such as participation rates and elite success. Secondly, the numerical data can be used to support the process of selecting the sample. For example, if the researcher sought to interview representatives from national governing bodies who were in receipt of varying levels of public funding for elite sport, the data available through UK Sport would be vital for making this judgement. Finally, the data can be used to corroborate claims made in both the interviews and the documents that are to be analysed.

4.7.1 Interviews

Yin (2003: 89) described interviewing as “one of the most important sources of case study information” and Peabody, Hammond, Torcom, Brown, Thompson and Kolodny (1990: 452) stated that interviews are “almost always” an appropriate research method in political science. In addition, Lilleker (2003: 208) described the usefulness of interviewing in research in politics: “We can learn more about the inner workings of the political process, the machinations between influential actors and how a sequence of events was viewed and responded to within the political machine.” There are four main types of interview described in the literature: structured, semi-structured, unstructured and group interviews, or focus groups (Bryman, 2001; Grix, 2010a; May, 2011). A structured interview is the least flexible of the four and involves the interviewer following a strict structure of questions, which is replicated across the sample of interviewees (Grix, 2010a). A semi-structured interview involves the researcher having a set of topics or questions to guide the interview but without the rigidity of putting the questions in a certain order (Grix, 2010a). This approach is more flexible, allows for the development of unforeseen topics to be covered and provides an opportunity for the researcher to seek clarification and elaboration (Lilleker, 2003; Grix, 2010a; May, 2011). An unstructured interview has open-ended questions and allows the interviewee to speak freely (Grix, 2010a) thus allowing the interviewee’s point of view to be understood (May, 2011). This approach is
particularly useful to research strategies such as life histories but it has limited relevance in a number of research strategies as it lacks comparability due to the open nature of the interview (Grix, 2010a; May, 2011). A group interview, or focus group, involves a group of people from a specific demographic discussing certain topics, with the researcher taking a role of moderator of the discussions in order to facilitate interactions within the group (Grix, 2010a; May, 2011). This approach provides an opportunity to observe group dynamics as well as gathering information, but the researcher should be cautious when seeking to generalise the views of the group interviewed to a wider population (May, 2011).

May (2011) described three conditions that should be considered in order for the researcher to get maximum benefit from their interviewing. The first condition to consider is whether the interviewee has access to the information that the researcher is trying to gain. This is an important factor to consider when making decisions about sampling: it is vital that the researcher interviews the right person or people. It can also shape the way that the researcher carries out the interview because the interviewee may be reluctant to share certain information (May, 2011). The second condition to consider is whether the interviewee understands what the interviewer wants from the interview. May (2011) described interviews as social encounters governed by social rules where the different parties involved have certain expectations. Therefore it is important for the researcher to offer some guidance in advance of the interview, for example outlining the topics that the researcher will aim to cover during the interview. This practice also covers an ethical consideration relating to informed consent, as well as being a practical consideration of the interviewee knowing what to expect and therefore the interview potentially being more efficient. The final condition that May (2011) described relates to motivation: it is important that the interviewee is motivated to provide information. The researcher should ensure that the interviewee feels valued and that the interviewer maintains their level of concentration and interest in what is being said during the interview.

Interviews can be useful methods of data collection as they can provide rich information and insights that the researcher might not be able to obtain through other sources such as documents (Grix, 2010a). Within sport organisations, certain information may be represented in strategic documents in order to align the organisation with its partners or funders but an interview with a senior person in that organisation may reveal issues or conflicts with the public image represented through documents.
A potential issue in interviewing that should be considered by the researcher is the challenge of addressing controversial issues: some interviewees may be very diplomatic and give a “party line” type response or even deny that the controversial issue exists; conversely, some interviewees might be very candid and use the opportunity of discussing the controversy with the researcher to defend their own position and seek support. For example, when questioned about relationships between key organisations, an interviewee might be seek to be tactful and focus on positive elements of the relationship while another interviewee might take the opportunity to point out the weaknesses and problems within the other organisation. The different responses might depend on the interviewees’ positions in the organisations – i.e.: how senior they are – and whether any issues are current or historical.

When conducting interviews, the researcher should consider the best method for documenting what was said and there are three main options open to the researcher, all with their own advantages and disadvantages. The first option is to rely on one’s memory and write up notes following the conclusion of the interview. The advantage of this option is that it leaves the researcher free to focus on the interviewee and build rapport without the distraction of taking notes but the potential drawback of this approach is that important points may be forgotten or the data misrepresented. The second option is to take brief notes during the interview. This allows a greater degree of assurance that the account of the interview is accurate and allows the researcher to record both what was said and also the environment or body language, however points may still be missed. Lilleker (2003) recommended that if this approach is taken then the researcher should take time immediately after the interview to enhance their notes with a fresh memory of the interview. A disadvantage with this option is that the researcher is distracted from focusing upon the interviewee and may also distract the interviewee. The third option is to record the interview using a dictaphone. The advantage of this approach is that a fully accurate record of what was said and, as with using one’s memory, it leaves the researcher free to engage directly with the interviewee. However, the process of transcribing the interview can be very time-consuming and the reliance on technology is not always free from problems so the researcher has to be prepared for batteries to fail or other problems. In addition, the interviewee may be inhibited by the presence of the recorder and therefore reluctant in some of their responses to questions. Peabody et al (1990) highlighted this issue specifically with regards to elite interviews where the interviewee may not want their
comments to be recorded, despite assurances of anonymity by the researcher. In the case of recording the interview, it is ethical for the researcher to ask for the interviewee's permission to record the interview and the researcher must be prepared for a scenario where the interviewee refuses to be recorded.

A potential drawback of using interviews for data collection is the interviewer. Grix (2010a) and May (2011) both noted that the interviewer must be have specific skills, such as being able to establish rapport with the subject and to structure appropriate questions, in order to gain maximum benefit from the interviews that they carry out. In addition, some characteristics of the interviewer such as their gender or ethnicity, may also impact upon the responses that the interviewer gives. The impact of the interviewer on the quality of the data collected relates to the positivist criticism of interpretivism that the researcher impacts upon the data that can result in the research lacking objectivity. Peabody et al (1990: 454) stated that a successful interviewer “is one who develops a keen awareness of his or her own reactions and those of the respondent” while Berry (2002: 679) wrote, “the best interviewer is not one who writes the best questions. Rather, excellent interviewers are excellent conversationalists.”

The interview approach that was employed for this study was semi-structured interviews as this approach allows the researcher to have consistent themes across all of the interviews but also retains flexibility to tailor the interviews to the specific interviewee and accommodate the flow of conversation and any additional topics that arose during the interviews. With permission of the interviewees, the interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. In addition to recording the interview, the researcher made notes before, during and after the interview in order to make a record of the environment in which the interview took place, the researcher's impressions of the interview and any issues that arose. The process for analysing the interview data is discussed below.

4.7.2 Sampling for interviews

In quantitative research, the sample that is studied is often a representative subset of the whole population so that any results can be used to generalise across that whole population and methods are used to identify the sample in order to ensure that is representative. This is known as a representative sample, which can often be
established through a process of probability sampling (Bryman, 2001). However, in qualitative research this approach is not usually appropriate because the researcher is seeking understanding of a specific case rather than looking to make generalisations so they will only target specific sections of society depending on the people or organisations that are relevant to their study. Crucially, the researcher must identify a sample frame, which is the process of identifying the sample.

Bryman (2001) described convenience sampling as being employed when the subjects that the researcher wishes to interview are difficult to access. Similarly, snowball sampling can be used when interview subjects suggest, and can make introductions to, other subjects for the research (Bryman, 2001, Grix, 2010a, May, 2011). When he described snowball sampling, May (2011) gave the example of people with issues such as homelessness as being appropriate cases for using this method of sampling because such people are difficult to access. However, this approach is also relevant for accessing interviewees in positions of power as they may be more likely to offer their time to a researcher if there has been an introduction made by a colleague or acquaintance rather than being contacted by the researcher without an introduction (Grix 2010a). Access to subjects can be an issue for researchers carrying out case study research as the case is so narrow. A further issue with sampling in qualitative research is that the decision as to what is significant within the research lies with the researcher and is influenced by his or her characteristics, thus making it very difficult to replicate the research (Bryman, 2001).

For this research, a thorough review of organisations involved in the area was carried out for each case study. This included examining government policy documents and strategies, reviewing existing literature and accessing news articles. From this review, a list of organisations and people within those organisations was compiled. As well as focusing on the organisations responsible for specific areas of the case studies, there were interviews carried out with representatives of organisations that had more of a crosscutting role, for example, national governing bodies of sport (NGBs) and representatives of the government. It was also important to consider organisations that have limited responsibility for sport but that are influential in policymaking: for example, the Department of Health has a health promotion programme called Change for Life, which includes sport and physical activity.

In addition to the desk research outlined above, the research used a snowball sampling method (Richards, 1996). The reason for this is that some people within
sport policy may not be easily accessible so working through a network of professional contacts may allow a wider sample to be accessed.

In terms of targeting specific people within the policy landscape, the following criteria were applied:

1. Position of strategic overview of their organisation (for example, senior manager, chief executive officer or Board member)
2. Responsibility for planning for the future
3. Been involved in specific role or sport as a whole for a period of at least 5 years so they have a perception of changes and developments in the landscape
4. Representative of sport within the UK and/or England

As a result of this sampling approach, the following interviews were carried out:

- 10 interviews with senior personnel from sport-specific organisations that are responsible for the elite level of their sport, including National Governing Bodies
- 10 interviews with senior personnel from non-sport specific organisations that are responsible for elite sport, including the government and public funded bodies.

4.7.3 Elite Interviewing

In addition to considering the structure of the interviews, the researcher must make an assessment of the status of the people who are to be interviewed, because different approaches must be employed for different populations. This is not just with regards to the interview itself but also how the researcher accesses the interviewee and their follow-up after the interview. Richards (1996: 199) defined elites as those “who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society” and “are likely to have more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public”. In line with this definition, the interviews to be conducted within this research will be with elite personnel within sports organisations and politics, as listed above, and therefore appropriate consideration must be given to the mechanisms of accessing the interviewees and how the interview is carried out by the researcher.
Accessing elites to interview can be challenging. If the people being sought for interviews are public figures then locating them is not a problem but it is not always straightforward to obtain agreement from the person to be interviewed (Richards, 1996; Goldstein, 2002; Lilleker, 2003). Issues of access may have an effect on the research as a whole if it prevents the researcher from gathering an appropriate sample (Richards, 1996). Communication with potential subjects is a crucial consideration in order to present both the researcher and the research as being worthy of the elite’s time. Lilleker (2003) recommended written communication as the best approach to establishing contact with a potential subject. Similarly, it is important to follow the interview with some form of communication of thanks to the interviewee, which may leave open the opportunity for further contact (Peabody et al, 1990). Writing a letter could be described as a more traditional and formal method of written communication but email is a much more common medium and may be more appropriate for communicating with subjects if they travel a lot or work from different locations as emails can still be accessed regardless of location so sending a letter may slow the process.

Time is an important consideration when interviewing elites because they can view their time as being particularly valuable therefore the researcher must prepare carefully to make best use of the time available for the interview (Peabody et al, 1990; Richards, 1996; Lilleker, 2003). As part of the preparation for the interview, the researcher must ensure that they have some background information about the interviewee in order to avoid asking questions to which the interviewer should already know the answers (Peabody et al, 1990). Preparation is also a key consideration because the researcher may only have one opportunity to interview the subject and the researcher must be prepared to adapt their approach or their questions in the event that the interviewee refuses to discuss certain subjects (Lilleker, 2003). Those who have previously been in elite positions may be more likely to have the time to be interviewed but may be less accessible than those currently in public positions (Peabody et al, 1990).

Richards (1996: 201) highlighted the issue of power relations in an interview, particularly in elite interviewing, and warned that the interviewee may seek to dominate the interview but stated that this is “the very nature of elite interviews.” Lilleker (2003: 211) also highlighted this issue and stated that while it may be detrimental, it can also “throw up some interesting details.” As stated above,
establishing rapport is an important aspect of any interview but may be particularly valuable in an elite interview so that the interviewee trusts and respects the researcher and is therefore more open in their responses. Peabody et al (1990) and Richards (1996) recommended breaking the ice and finding common ground in order to establish rapport.

As well as considering the position of the interviewees as elites within the landscape being studied, it is important to outline the status of the interviewer because, as noted above, there is an inevitable interaction between the researcher and the data when employing qualitative methods. All interviews were carried out by the researcher who is a woman aged under 30 years with experience in sport both in academia and as a sports development professional. The researcher is a graduate of sport studies and current student of Loughborough University and has previously worked for UK Sport. The researcher’s position as a Loughborough University student and a former employee of UK Sport may have influenced the interviewee’s opinion depending on their personal view or their organisation’s relationship with those institutions. It could also be argued that the researcher’s gender and age could have influenced the interviewees’ opinions of her.

4.7.4 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a method of data collection that involves the collection and analysis of written text, although some researchers apply the term to analysis of video footage or images. Gomm (2004) stated that a number of the terms used in document analysis do not have fixed definitions and May (2011: 200) wrote “critical approaches to documentary sources are far from being unified bodies of thought.” Document analysis has been employed as a data collection method by authors researching public sport policy, for example Piggin, Jackson and Lewis (2009a) and Piggin, Jackson and Lewis (2009b) examining sport policy in New Zealand and Houlihan and Green (2009) examined the structure of public bodies in sport in the UK. May (2011: 208) stated “documents provide an important source of data for understanding events, process and transformations in social relations” and Yin (2003) stated that the use of document analysis is often a relevant source of data in case study research and can be used to corroborate other sources of evidence.
The documents that a researcher uses can take a number of forms: they can be public or private, formal or informal, official or personal (Bryman, 2001; Yin, 2003; May, 2011). For the purpose of studying public policy, documents issued by the government and other public bodies are the most suitable sources and, at a practical level, are accessible for the researcher as they are in the public domain. However, official policy documents are not the only source for analysing policy statements or general direction: other sources could also be considered such as the mass media. For example, Piggin et al (2009a) analysed a newspaper article written by the CEO of Sport and Recreation New Zealand in 2006 as part of their research into sport policy discourse in the country.

Grix (2010a) stated that the researcher must consider the context of the document being analysed, in particular the author, the purpose of the text and the intended audience. Scott (1990: 96) also highlighted the issue of context and stated that public documents “are shaped by the structure and activities of the departments of organisations responsible for them.” Yin (2003) stated that the documents that the researcher analyses would have been written for a specific audience and purpose other than the research being carried out. Gomm (2004: 245) wrote that the time that the author can take in writing a document, compared with, for example, being interviewed, means that they can “impose a beginning-to-end consistency” in the text and present themselves, or the subject, in a measured way. This does not imply that all authors aim to mislead the reader but that the text can be crafted, or written and re-written to the author’s (or authors’) satisfaction. However, a benefit of document analysis is that once the document is published it becomes static, thus allowing a researcher to revisit the text (Yin, 2003), which may not be possible with other methods of data collection. Hodder (2003: 155) also highlighted this point and stated that written text “endures physically and thus can be separated across space and time from its author, producer, or user.”

The researcher should be sensitive to potential issues of quality control in document analysis so it is important to make an assessment of the quality of the documents (Scott, 1990). When assessing the quality of the documents to analyse, Scott (1990) recommended considering four factors: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. Assessing the authenticity of a document involves determining whether the document is genuine and may involve considering the level of consistency within the document, the source of the document – and in particular whether it is an original or a copy – and the authorship. In the case of government
documents, the document could have been written by one person or group of people but be attributed to someone else: in particular a paper that is signed by a government minister may have been written by his or her advisors (Scott, 1990). The credibility of a document relates to whether what is written is sincere and accurate, so the researcher must make “an appraisal of how distorted its contents are likely to be” (Scott, 1990: 22). Scott (1990) stressed that all documents will have a degree of bias, and could therefore be seen as inaccurate or insincere, and highlighted that government documents are based on particular political interests so one view will always be represented over another. Determining the representativeness of a document or set of documents being analysed involves the researcher considering whether the documents in question is a complete set or is representative of the subject and timeframe being researched. There could be issues of documents’ “survival’ and ‘availability’” (Scott, 1990: 25) as documents may have been destroyed or lost. Finally, the meaning of a document can relate to its literal meaning or its interpretive meaning and involves the researcher considering how and why the document was written and published and what information it can give the researcher about the context. Scott (1990: 28) stated “The ultimate purpose of examining documents... is to arrive at an understanding of the meaning and significance of what the document contains.” Despite presenting these conditions to be considered regarding a document’s quality, Scott (1990) stated that documents are still useful in research so long as their shortcomings are recognised by the researcher.

Yin (2003) noted a criticism of document analysis in case study research which is that some researchers’ over-use of the method and also that some researchers do not fully interrogate the issue of truth in the documents used in their analysis. These criticisms can be countered by using several sources of evidence in research and also by considering the objectives of any documents used in the research (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, Yin (2003) highlighted the selection of documents as a potential drawback of document analysis because there may be bias if the collection of documents used in the research is incomplete, which relates to Scott’s (1990) explanation of representativeness explored above. The researcher must consider the sources and timeframes of documents used in the analysis and seek to achieve a representative sample of documents. However, this could be a factor that cannot be controlled by the researcher as issues of access can arise. May (2011) stated that a researcher has to consider how accessible the documents are and may find that the documents cannot be accessed, potentially due to holders of the data preventing access to it. A further consideration for the researcher in studying government policy
is the accessibility of policy or strategy documents that have been superseded by newer policies or abandoned following a change of government, which may affect the access to documents and therefore the representativeness of the sample.

4.7.5 Sampling for document analysis

As the focus of this research is public policy, government policy documents on sport will be important sources of data. The majority of these documents will have been published by the government departments responsible for sport (namely the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and its predecessor, the Department for National Heritage) but it is also important to consider documents published by the department responsible for education due to talent identification being part of school sport, particularly under the PESSCL and PESSYP programmes. In addition, documents published by the government’s two sports agencies, UK Sport and Sport England, will also be analysed. Further sources of data will include strategic plans and annual reviews published by National Governing Bodies and also any strategy documents relating to sport that are published by commercial stakeholders.

In terms of the documents published by government departments and agencies and also NGBs, these will generally be available via the internet as they are public documents. The researcher will use a variety of sources in order to conduct a systematic search including library databases (SPORTDiscus, Business Source Complete, Economic and Social Data Service – Government, Political Studies Association, Political Science Resources), national archives, the Sports Development website (www.sportdevelopment.info) and organisation-specific websites (UK Sport, Sport England, NGBs, etc.). Keywords that were used for the search included the names of organisations and sports and terms relating to the subject including “elite sport”, “talent identification”, “talent transfer”, “Olympic Games”, “medals” and “no compromise”. See Appendix D full list of key words.

In addition, it was possible for the researcher to access internal documents. When documents that were not publicly accessible are referred to during interviews, the researcher requested a copy and assured the interviewee that the document would be stored securely and not shared with other readers.
4.7.6 Analysing the Data – Thematic Analysis

The data collected through interviews and document analysis will be analysed using the method of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was described by Boyatzis (1998: 4) as “a process for encoding qualitative information” and involves the researcher identifying something in the data as being significant, coding it and interpreting it alongside other data. Thematic analysis is often associated with content analysis due to the process of coding data but content analysis is more focused upon examining the frequency of certain words or phrases rather than analysing the meaning (May, 2011). It is important to note that, as described in the section on Document Analysis, there is an issue of the lack of uniformity in the terms used in relation to this data analysis approach. Some authors use the term “Qualitative content analysis” (see Bryman, 2001) and the procedural terms that are used also vary so there are references in the literature to “codes” (Bryman, 2001; Miles and Huberman, 1994) or “themes” (Ryan and Bernard, 2003), and Boyatzis (1998) uses the term “thematic code”.

Boyatzis (1998: 5) described an advantage of using thematic analysis to analyse qualitative data and wrote that the process “allows the researcher to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner”. This point is significant for this research as data will be collected through methods of interviewing and document analysis. Boyatzis (1998) cited a number of academic subjects where thematic analysis has been employed in research including sociology, psychology and political science and described the flexibility of the approach being applicable across disciplines regardless of the ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher.

The process of identifying themes is not finite and Ryan and Bernard (2003: 275) stated that they can be identified “before, during and after data collection”. Boyatzis (1998) described three different ways of developing the thematic code – theory-driven, driven by prior research and data-driven – and suggested that these three approaches could be viewed as a continuum from theory-driven to data-driven. The literature review and the researcher’s existing knowledge can both contribute to this process, as well as the data collection itself (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Bryman (2001) described a process for coding qualitative including commencing the process as soon as possible and reviewing codes to ensure that they do not overlap. While the codes or themes should not overlap, Ryan and
Bernard (2003) highlighted that the researcher should identify whether they are linked to each other and how. As well as coding text into themes, the researcher should be aware of data that do not fit with the themes, which can contradict other data and may require other themes to be considered – this is termed “negative cases” (Ryan and Bernard, 2003: 278).

Boyatzis (1998) described four key competencies that a researcher needs in order to be able to carry out thematic analysis. These competencies are: the ability to recognise patterns in data, openness and flexibility in the reading of the data, systematic thinking and planning in order to manage data and knowledge of the research area. Boyatzis (1998) also identified three potential obstacles in the process of thematic analysis. These are the researcher projecting their own values, which can cloud their judgement of the data, inadequate sampling and the researcher’s mood and their style of working.

Bryman (2001) identified two key criticisms of thematic analysis. Firstly, there can be an issue of text being taken out of context when it is coded and “the social setting can be lost” (Bryman, 2001: 401). Secondly, there is an issue of the text being chopped up and therefore the flow of information being lost. There can also be issues of reliability and validity, which are explored in the next section.

Some of the themes in this research have been determined through the literature review and the development of the research aims and objectives but the researcher remains open and flexible in considering further themes that may emerge in the data collection process. The themes identified thus far are:

1. Funding of elite sport
2. The structure of the policy landscape in terms of different organisations and their roles and responsibilities
3. The impact of the hosting of London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games
4. Relative priority of elite sport compared with community/participation and youth sport
5. The division of the stages of elite athlete development including talent identification and talent development
4.8 Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

An inherent issue within qualitative research is that it can be challenged in terms of reliability and validity, which for some scholars are measures of the quality of the research. May (2011) stated that reliability relates to whether the same result could be achieved if the study was repeated and validity is a question of whether the research measures what it set out to measure. As qualitative research is not based on the same strict measures as quantitative research it is often seen as less reliable in terms of the results being replicable from study to study and the more open nature of methodologies employed in qualitative research, such as semi-structured interviews, means that validity can be questioned as two researchers may take different approaches or even find different results using the same approach.

The methods of data collection can influence the level of reliability and validity within the research outputs. For example, it is not possible to exactly replicate an interview because of the social construction of an interview, which is influenced by the people taking part. Even if the researcher had the same subject and used questions phrased in an identical way, the interview would be different if conducted on separate occasions. One recommendation for ensuring reliability when conducting interviews is that the researcher should seek to use an interview schedule. However, this approach can lead to the interview being quite rigid (May, 2011) and would not be suitable for the interviews to be carried out in this research but headlines or themes will be important elements to guide the interviews and some questions may be replicated with different subjects. The sample used in qualitative research can have a bearing on validity in particular because different researchers could prioritize different sources or samples so the researcher needs to be clear in explaining the sample used.

The methods employed by the researcher to analyse the data can also be problematic when considering reliability and validity. In the case of thematic analysis, Boyatzis (1998) raised the issue of the researcher’s themes or codes that are used in the analysis as one researcher may set different themes to another researcher thus raising an issue of reliability from the outset. Therefore the researcher must be transparent in their explanation of the development of the themes and Boyatzis (1998) recommended that the researcher should plan well and be systematic to ensure consistency in analysis.
Bryman (2001) also explored the terms internal validity and external validity where the former refers to the ability to make causal statements and the latter refers to whether the results of a study can be used to make generalizations. A key consideration is that the aim of case study research and many qualitative methods is not usually to form conclusions that can then be used for generalizations or to make causal statements but is instead to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific event or phenomenon. However, the researcher still needs to consider the issues of reliability and validity to ensure that the research is of good quality.

4.9 Summary

This study will use a critical realist perspective. As described earlier in this chapter, critical realism is located between the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. It emphasizes the importance of the researcher acknowledging the significance of both observable and unobservable phenomena within the data collection and analysis process, which is particularly important when studying policy.

The study will use a case study research design and will examine the following three thematic areas within elite sport as the cases:

1. Youth talent foundations
2. Nurturing and transferring talent
3. Sustaining world class athletes

The methods that will be used to collect data will be interviews and document analysis. The interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured method so that key themes are common across the interview data but there is the possibility of flexibility within each interview. As the interviewees will be senior figures within sport, the researcher will be mindful of the nuances of elite interviewing. The key stakeholder groups that will be considered within the data collection are National Governing Bodies of sport, the government and its agencies and other non-government organisations with a national remit for sport and specific focus on one or more of the cases to be studied. Thematic analysis will be employed as a process of analyzing the data collected from both of the research methods. As stated earlier in the chapter, some themes for analysis have been identified but more themes may emerge from the data.
The Gantt chart below (figure 4.3) shows a timeline for the research from commencing theory work in July 2011 to completing the write-up of the research in April 2014.

Figure 4.2 – Research timeline

|-------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
Chapter 5 – The Elite Sport Landscape

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 reviewed the development of sport policy and the emergence of talent identification, talent development and elite support as policy priorities. This chapter will provide an overview of the sport policy stakeholders’ environment as context for the presentation and analysis of more detailed empirical evidence in the case studies in the chapters that follow. The first section will focus on the government and its agencies; the second section will focus on national governing bodies for sport (NGBs) and the third section will focus on the non-government organisations within the sector. These three stakeholder groups have been identified during the preparatory research as being of particular significance in the domestic elite sport policy landscape.

The focus of this research is public sport policy so the government is a logical site for data collection, specifically the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the government department responsible for sport. In addition to DCMS, the non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) UK Sport and Sport England have been analysed. These NDPBs have responsibility for distributing and monitoring the use of public funds from the National Lottery and the Exchequer. There is a wide landscape of other organisations that deliver sport policy that will also be considered. NGBs are the main recipients of public funding in sport, and both Sport England and UK Sport work closely with NGBs. The NGBs are responsible for the development of their sport, including talent identification and development and the selection and support of national teams. In addition to government organisations and NGBs, there are non-government organisations that are key parts of the policy landscape including charities, lobby groups and Olympic and Paralympic bodies. The roles of these organisations are much more varied but can be particularly significant in the development and delivery of elite sport policy. A potential fourth stakeholder group in the elite sport policy landscape is the commercial sector. As will be indicated later in this chapter, the relationship between sports organisations, in particular NGBs, and their commercial partners, as well as their interactions with certain sport marketplaces is significant and will be considered in the discussion of NGBs.

Although this project focuses upon three domestic stakeholder groups in the elite sport policy landscape, the researcher acknowledges that a further group could also be considered, namely international stakeholders. The interaction between domestic
and international stakeholders for sport has grown over time and the influence of the international community may lead to questions about the autonomy of the domestic policy landscape. Houlihan (1994: 106) stated “by the mid-1980s it was clear that a number of sports issues could no longer be resolved within domestic policy communities” and cited doping and violence in sport as examples of this. Houlihan and Green (2008: 9) further highlighted the significance of the increasing influence of international actors on domestic policymaking: “The assumption that the major determinants of public policy are confined within sovereign state boundaries has, in recent years, become progressively less persuasive as an increasing number of formerly domestic policy issues are now embedded in a series of supranational policy networks.” Houlihan (2009) explained globalisation through two terms: commercialisation and governmentalisation. Commercialisation means the growth of sport as a business, especially in the areas of broadcasting and branding of sport, while governmentalisation refers to the increasingly interventionist approach of governments in the development of sport.

International organisations involved in sport can be either international governmental organisations or international non-governmental organisations (Rittberger and Zangl, 2006) and can be involved with sport either as a primary or secondary concern of the organisation (Houlihan, 2009). Their remits can also vary from being primarily regulatory, such as the World Anti-Doping Authority (WADA) and the Court of Arbitration for Sport, to advisory, such as UNICEF’s Convention on the Rights of the Child, which includes the right to play.

NGBs and other domestic sports organisations such as National Olympic Committees (NOCs) experience the influences of international non-governmental organisations through both sport-specific organisations, such as international federations or regional federations, and organisations that work with more than one sport, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC), WADA and the Court of Arbitration for Sport. In the UK, the British Olympic Association felt this influence acutely when they were forced to drop one of their anti-doping by-laws that prevented any athlete who had previously served a ban for a doping offence from ever being a member of the British Olympic team. Other important influences include the International Federations making decisions about the hosting of major events for their sport and rule changes. For example, the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI – the international cycling union) recently decided to change the programme of events
to be included in international competitions and the number of competitors allowed from each country, which limited the number of medals any one country could win.

International governmental organisations involved in sport include the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe. The UN has a specific office for sport, the United Nations Office for Sport Development and Peace (UNOSDP), which has working groups focusing on areas including Sport and Gender, Sport and Peace and Sport and Health. Other offices of the United Nations that have a history of being involved with sport include UNESCO, which has adopted the International Convention against Doping in Sport, and UNICEF, which incorporates the right to play into the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The most significant impact of the EU’s involvement in sport was the Bosman ruling in 1995, which led to a revision of the transfer process of professional football players within the EU. The Council of Europe focuses its work in sport on two key issues: spectator violence and anti-doping.

The increasing commercialisation of sport presents a range of opportunities for business to interact with sport through areas such as broadcasting and sponsorship. However, elements of commercial activities are constrained by international sports organisations such as the IOC, which has strict rules governing the use of certain words, phrases and symbols linked to the movement. As well as commercialisation providing opportunities for businesses to make money in sport, it has led to the professionalization of the management of sports organisations. Houlihan (2009: 55) described the UK’s former government’s modernisation agenda in sport as being “strongly influenced by commercial management practices” and stated that the reformed principles and mechanisms of working in NGBs “reinforce the process of globalisation”.

While the degree of influence that various international governmental and non-governmental organisations have on domestic policy is varied, it is clear that the policy environment is complex and that this has resulted in questions about the autonomy of domestic policymaking. As stated above, the researcher is aware of these influences and this context was borne in mind in the data gathering and analysis process but the scope of this research project remains the domestic elite sport policy in the UK. These relationships and the dynamics of the international and domestic contexts will be assessed further in the case studies that follow.
5.2 The government and its agencies

As described in chapter 2, the government has taken an increasingly interventionist approach to sport over time. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for sport policy in the UK, which includes mandates on betting and broadcasting. Public funding from both the government exchequer and the National Lottery is channelled into sport organisations and programmes mainly via the government’s non-departmental public bodies, UK Sport and Sport England (and the Home Country sport councils as appropriate).

The relationship between the government and the sports councils, UK Sport and Sport England, is very different now to how it had been in the past with the government much more involved in the business of the organisations and setting their objectives. There are two key reasons for this that can be identified. Firstly, the government’s attitude towards sport has changed over time. Houlihan (1991: 83-84) stated that the government could use arms-length bodies so that it can still retain some control but not have to get too involved: “sport, like the arts, was not seen as a proper sphere for party political or direct government action and consequently government involvement has been mediated through quasi-governmental bodies.”

The government is now much more closely involved with the work of the sports councils and relies upon the expertise that exists in the organisations. Interviewee E, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O4), shared an opinion that the sports councils are now very close to government: “they’re organs of government” (Interview E, 26/04/2012). The second reason for the shift in the government’s relationship with the sports councils is modernisation. The modernising of sports organisations during the Labour government was a long process of what Foucault would term the ‘disciplining’ of the NDPBs and refining of the interpretation of their status as ‘arms-length’ bodies protected by a Royal Charter. These organisations are now run in a business-like fashion with strong governance practices and reporting mechanisms that seek to ensure transparent use of public funds.

Structurally, DCMS has shrunk as a department since the beginning of the Coalition government in 2010 due to the reduction in public spending. Interviewee L, a senior representative from the government, described the structure of the department as having fewer people working on policy and less time available to engage with the sector, which has resulted in increased reliance on the NDPBs and their partner organisations to deliver policy and report back to government on progress (Interview
The same interviewee went on to state: “in some ways the bodies [UK Sport and Sport England] themselves have more power and control over their areas.” As a result of modernisation, the organisational development of the NDPBs and the sports NGBs in particular means that these organisations are well-equipped to take on more responsibility that would previously have been more tightly held by government, thus a large department is not needed.

UK Sport is the government agency responsible for elite sport across the UK and it has three core functions: Performance, Events and International (UK Sport, 2012a). Within the performance stream of its work, there are six elements that make up its “winning formula”: international training and competition, training facilities, athlete personal award, support systems, medicine and science support and coaching and management support (UK Sport, 2012a: 23). These performance elements are all included in the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP) which is in turn split into three levels: talent, development and podium. Up to 2006, responsibility for the WCPP was split between UK Sport and the home country sports councils but the decision was then taken for UK Sport to hold full responsibility for the programme, which resulted in greater power for UK Sport and a much larger budget.

5.2.1 Policy priorities

As noted above, the modernisation agenda has had a strong impact on the structure of sports organisations and the government’s interactions with the sector and while it was initially a Labour policy that began to be implemented in the early 2000s, it is still observable as a policy priority in the landscape today. All NGBs in receipt of public funding are encouraged to run in a very business-like way in terms of management and accountability, including a contractual arrangement for funding between the NGBs and UK Sport. For organisations funded by UK Sport, this is set in the context of a very narrow remit of increasing the quality of their teams and winning medals on the international stage. Initially the drive by UK Sport to modernise the NGBs was part of the Labour government’s agenda and £5million was invested in the period 2001-2005 but later the imperative for modern, business-like delivery partners was reemphasised when UK Sport sought additional funding from the Treasury to prepare for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and brought in the No Compromise approach (Houlihan and Green, 2009).
The manifestation of the modernisation agenda has included financial auditing to ensure that NGBs are fit to receive government money, scrutiny of governance standards, such as the composition of NGBs' boards, including the independence of members and the ratio of men to women. The emphasis on modernisation has been described by the NGBs as being a condition of increased funding from the government. However, while the increased funding has been welcome, the senior officer from NGB D, a small Olympic NGB (organisation O3), described the conditions relating to modernisation, and in particular the focus on governance since the coalition government was formed in 2010, as becoming “more and more onerous” (interview, 02/04/2012) and that it is forcing NGBs to change from being membership organisations focused on sport to becoming businesses. The government’s focus on developing plans and initiatives was criticised by the senior officer from NGB B, one of the more successful Olympic NGBs (organisation O2), who stated “if writing strategic plans for sport was an Olympic event we would be brilliant at it, we’d win a gold medal every time” (Interview B, 01/03/2012). Interviewee D, a senior official from a smaller Olympic NGB, described the growing focus on governance and strategy as a difficult transition for the sport and members of the board find it challenging:

“We have a load of people on our board of directors who wouldn’t know a business from a barn, they’re literally all ex-coaches, know [the sport], love [the sport], want to give something back to [the sport] but on the business side there’s nothing there. So we go into every board meeting now and talk about we’re going to do this, we’re going to do that, risk management and they’re like ‘what the hell are you talking about?’” (Interview D, 02/04/2012).

The Modernisation agenda commenced during the Labour government and continues to be a feature of sport today. The Conservative Party also focused upon the management and delivery of sport in their pre-election sport paper, *Extended opportunities: A Conservative policy paper on sport* (Conservative Party, 2009), and described a need to have efficient delivery of sport. The Coalition government also highlighted modernisation and good governance in 2010: “we are modernising the structure of sport, in order to maximise funding to the frontline, by bringing UK Sport and Sport England together and working with National Governing Bodies in order to drive improvements to their governance” (DCMS, 2010: 5-6).
One area of focus for the Conservative Party and subsequently for the Coalition government was the plan to merge the non-departmental public bodies UK Sport and Sport England. There was a lengthy consultation process about the feasibility of this option, which was led by Sir Keith Mills, who acted a broker on behalf of relevant parties. The process was delayed in 2012 due to the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games and then the decision was taken in January 2013 to abandon the plans, although both organisations were asked to look to make savings (Gibson, 2013).

In the Conservative Party’s pre-election sport policy paper, under the heading “Elite and High Performance Sport”, there was no reference to the performance of the nation’s international teams and athletes and instead priorities relating to major events, legal disputes and anti-doping were highlighted (Conservative Party, 2009: 7). The Coalition government’s only sport policy publication since it was elected in 2010 has been Creating a Sporting Habit for Life (DCMS, 2012a), which focused on the development of sport for young people. The document mentions the importance of supporting young talented people’s development but there is no mention of elite sport more generally. It could be inferred from the lack of explicit discussion of elite sport in these policy documents that the Conservative party and later the coalition government were content with the established policy and planned to continue with the support of elite sport in the manner that the previous government had initiated.

The hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has been a significant factor in steering elite sport policy since the bid was won in 2005. Interviewee S, a senior representative from a national non-government sports organisation, emphasised the importance of the decision by the IOC to award the hosting of 2012 to London: “that became a moment where there was a platform for debate which created an entirely different perspective” (Interview S, 03/06/2013). While a number of interviewees focused on the hosting of London 2012 as something that shaped elite sport policy and made it more focused, interviewee T, a senior official from a national sport programme, stated that there was very little semblance of a policy before 2005 and that the system has been reactive. The same interviewee also stated that there were targets for 2012 and “a very specific desire to have a result on a very specific day” (Interview T, 06/06/2013) (i.e.: achieving a certain number of medals and position of fourth or better in the Olympic Games medal table) and policies and procedures have developed in the UK as a result of being the host nation. A key decision that was taken after the bid was won was to
increase funding to elite sport (discussed more fully in the next section), and also to transfer full responsibility for the WCPP to UK Sport. So the winning of the bid in 2005 could be described as a critical juncture in the formation of a path dependency because it focused attention upon the British team’s success at the London 2012 Games and therefore began to limit other policy options within sport.

Leading up to the Games and in the period since, a key priority for the government has been to achieve a legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In 2008, DCMS under the Labour government published Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games, which focused on five key promises:

1. Making the UK a world-leading sporting nation
2. Transforming the heart of East London
3. Inspiring a new generation of young people
4. Making the Olympic Park a blueprint for sustainable living
5. Demonstrating the UK is a creative, inclusive and welcoming place to live in, visit and for business

(DCMS, 2008b: 6-7)

For the first promise, “elite achievement” and the specific targets of fourth at the Olympic Games and second at the Paralympic Games were key points (DCMS, 2008b: 19). The government focused on its role as a funder of elite sport through the National Lottery and highlighted the existing programmes to deliver talent identification and development and support for elite athletes including the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) and the WCPP. This document did not include any new plans for elite sport but gave details of how the government expected to reach its targets and sustain performance. In 2010, following the election of the Coalition government, a document was published by DCMS titled Plans for the Legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games (DCMS, 2010) that highlighted the importance of the delivery of the Games and key legacy elements. References to high performance sport were fleeting and focused on maintaining funding to support the British teams to deliver results.

Immediately after the 2012 Games, the Sports Minister at the time, Hugh Robertson, announced a ten-point plan for legacy from the Games, including three points referring to elite sport. The ten points were:
1. Elite Funding
2. World Class Facilities
3. Major Sports Events
4. Places People Play
5. Youth Sport Strategy (Whole Sport Plans)
6. Join In
7. School Games
8. PE
9. Disability Sport
10. International Development

This statement did not reveal anything new for elite sport but reiterated the government's support for elite sport through funding for sports and athletes ahead of Rio 2016, the importance of new facilities that had been built for the Games for supporting elite athletes’ training and the significance of the major events bids that had been won (Robertson, 2012). Also after the Games, Lord Sebastian Coe was appointed by the Prime Minister as an adviser on the issue of legacy and a special unit was set up within the Cabinet Office to oversee progress towards the government's legacy goals.

The House of Lords also set up a committee to examine the legacy of the Games and published a report titled *Keeping the flame alive: the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy* (House of Lords, 2013). The inquiry examined the legacy of London 2012 and made recommendations under the following headings:

1. Sporting Participation
2. School Age Sport
3. High Performance Sport
4. The Legacy of Sports Facilities
5. The East London Legacy
6. The Economic, Social and Cultural Legacy
7. The Governance and Delivery of Legacy

Within the high performance sport section, there were three key recommendations made by the House of Lords committee: firstly, that all sports should have athletes commissions in order for the views of athletes to be considered by their NGBs. Secondly, that the *No Compromise* approach to funding Olympic and Paralympic
Sports should be revised and made more flexible in order to support the fledgling sports, and in particular fledgling team sports, where the UK does not have as long a tradition as with sports such as swimming and athletics. Finally, the committee recommended that the necessary steps be taken to ensure that the British Olympic team continues to have a women’s football team.

Crucially for the government, the London 2012 Games were generally well received by the British public. Mackay (2012) reported that 76.3% of Olympic Games tickets and 91% of Paralympic Games tickets were sold to the British public, which met a pre-Games target that 75% of ticket sales should be domestic. A poll conducted by ComRes for the BBC found that 69% of people polled felt that hosting the Olympic Games was worth the investment of public money (ComRes, 2013). To reflect on Kingdon’s multiple streams framework, and in particular the political stream, these poll results would indicate a positive public mood in relation to London 2012, which could have a serve to justify the prioritisation of the Games by the government and the spending of public funds. As well as a positive attitude towards the Games, there was a positive attitude towards the success of the British team. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, stated that there was an appreciation for the British team’s success that was cemented after London 2012: “the guy sitting in my pub that perhaps hadn’t understood it in Beijing certainly got it in London” (Interview R, 02/05/2013).

5.2.2 Finance

The introduction of funding for elite sport from the National Lottery in 1997 is often cited as a key turning point in elite sport policy and the interviewees reflected this. For example, interviewee B, a senior official an Olympic NGB, stated that the introduction of National Lottery funding “was probably the biggest single change in sport” (Interview B, 01/03/2012). Interviewee P, a senior official from a government funded national sports organisation, and interviewee S, a senior official from a national non-government sports organisation, both highlighted that, as well as the financial resource that was made available for elite sport, the National Lottery triggered a new way of working in order to manage investment and creating a “systematic approach” (Interviewee S, 03/06/2013).

Interviewee R has held many positions within sport in the UK including being an elite athlete and a senior official for a number of different government and non-government sports organisations over many years and therefore is not referred to in this research as representing a specific organisation.
In 2006, following the successful bid to host the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Treasury agreed to increase funding to elite sport and the decision was also taken to transfer full responsibility for the WCPP to UK Sport, as noted in the previous section. Representatives of UK Sport presented evidence to the Treasury that indicated that with appropriate investment, the British Olympic team could achieve fourth place in the medal table. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, stated that this approach was a “hard nosed business plan” informed by a “mathematical model” (Interview R, 02/05/2013). Interviewee Q, a senior official from a national non-government sports organisation, stated that as well as the strength of the evidence and the people presenting the evidence, another crucial element in the decision-making process was the receptiveness of people in government to listen, understand and view UK Sport’s position favourably: “you had the right people at the right time: if that had been a different set of individuals it would have gone nowhere” (Interview Q, 08/04/2013). This resonates with a key feature of Kingdon’s Multiple Streams Framework: the window of opportunity, when conditions have to be appropriate for the streams to come together and policy change to take place. As a result of these decisions, the funds for the WCPP distributed by UK Sport increased dramatically between the Athens and Beijing Olympiads, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 – Funding for Olympic and Paralympic sport WCPP 2000-2016
(correct at 04/02/2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Olympic</strong></td>
<td>£58,900,000</td>
<td>£70,000,000</td>
<td>£235,103,000</td>
<td>£264,143,753</td>
<td>£273,571,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paralympic</strong></td>
<td>£10,075,602</td>
<td>£14,821,355</td>
<td>£29,545,872</td>
<td>£49,254,386</td>
<td>£71,247,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UK Sport website

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in 2010, which followed the establishment of the Coalition government, saw substantial reductions in spending across many government departments, including the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. However, the cuts to sports bodies were relatively modest within the wider context of the spending review. In the CSR settlement letter sent to Sue Campbell, the former Chair of UK Sport, the funding cut is shown as 28% (Hunt, 2010). In addition to detailing the funding cut, two policy priorities were outlined: firstly that UK Sport will fund Olympic and Paralympic sport to achieve medal success

internationally and, secondly, to work on the bidding for and staging of major events in the UK. With regards to the second priority, UK Sport was instructed to increase its budget for events by £5million thus indicating the government’s commitment to this area of sport policy. Despite this cut, the proportion of UK Sport’s income from the National Lottery increased and the organisation sought to ensure that there was minimal impact on the sports that it funded (UK Sport, 2012a).

Following on from this relatively small cut in budget in 2010, the CSR in 2013 was even more favourable for elite sport as UK Sport’s funding was not cut at all and the priorities remained the same (Miller, 2013). A budget of £125million per year up to the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games for UK Sport had been announced immediately after the London 2012 Games and this was not reduced during the CSR. Once again the CSR settlement letter stated the Secretary of State and DCMS’s position and their expectations of UK Sport in terms of its policy priorities of supporting high performance sport and bringing major events to the UK and levels of scrutiny in order to ensure that the budget was used appropriately. This continuity of political salience and policy direction, supported by a relatively unchanged level of funding indicates strong commitment for elite sport by the government thus indicating an ingrained, institutionalised approach that values elite sport and supports UK Sport as the organisation to deliver the government’s objectives in this area in spite of the potentially turbulent policy context of the change of government and the economic crisis.

5.3 National Governing Bodies

National governing bodies (NGBs) of sport in the UK are responsible for the governance of a specific sport, or occasionally a group of sports. There are 325 NGBs that are recognised by the four home country sports councils (Walters, Tacon and Trenberth, 2011). Sport England recognise 148 sports, which have varying statuses in terms of their NGBs because some are represented by more than one NGB, some are part of a cluster of sports represented by one NGB and some do not have a registered NGB but the sport is still recognised, but Sport England only funds

---

8 For example, British Swimming is responsible for governing elite programmes for five separate disciplines/sports: Olympic swimming, Paralympic swimming, water polo, synchronised swimming and diving.

9 Sport England, Sport Wales, Sport Scotland and Sport Northern Ireland
46 NGBs (Sport England[^10]). UK Sport’s funding for governing bodies is set in four-year cycles in line with the summer Olympic Games. For the London cycle UK Sport funded 32 governing bodies to support Olympic and Paralympic sports and invested £313million (UK Sport[^11]).

Houlihan and White (2002) noted that many of the NGBs were established as voluntary organisations in the nineteenth century with responsibility for regulating their sport and governing competitions. In the more recent past, NGBs’ responsibilities have expanded to include involvement in major facilities, events and a greater emphasis on the development of the whole sport from grassroots to elite, international competition (Houlihan and White, 2002). Walters et al (2011: 4) outlined the current roles of NGBs as follows: “organisation and management of competitions, coach development, increasing participation, developing talent, volunteer training, marketing and promoting the sport and bidding for and hosting competitions.”

The centrality of the role of NGBs has developed over time. The government’s sport strategy *Game Plan* (DCMS 2002) outlined plans to use sport as a tool for social development and sought to address inequalities in participation levels amongst different social groups. This resulted in a broad remit for Sport England and as a result it employed a range of mechanisms for delivering government policy, of which using NGBs was one approach. The decision to narrow the focus of sport policy on the dual priorities of increasing participation and winning medals in the DCMS document *Playing to Win* (2008a) put the responsibility for sport firmly in the hands of the NGBs as they became the primary recipients of Sport England funds (Keech, 2011). McDonald (2011: 380) highlighted the significance of the introduction of the World Class Performance Programme for working towards elite success and stated that the programme “brings NGBs into the heart of delivering high performance sport”.

Increased funding of NGBs has come from both government sources, primarily through the National Lottery, and commercial income. This increased funding, coupled with the Labour government’s concern with modernisation, has led many NGBs to become more professional in their approach. This has included an increase in the employment of full time staff, which for some sports may be hundreds of

people spread across the country, following recognised governance guidelines to ensure accountability and transparency in their work and having a board that governs the NGB that follows strict criteria set out by the public funders. This is perceived by some sports to be an onerous task that can detract from the real business of the developing the sport. Interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O3), highlighted this issue in terms of how it impacts upon and, at times, irks board members: “At our board meetings now half they board says ‘tell them to screw off, they can keep their money, we don’t have to do this’. So there’s a balance between modernising and pushing us into the next level of governance but it's been challenge” (Interview D, 02/04/2012).

A further change has been the increased involvement of government in guiding the priorities of NGBs. While the NGBs are formally independent from government, policy and public funding has led to them becoming less so. This was noted by a number of academics over time (Houlihan, 1997; Houlihan and White, 2002; Collins, 2010), and Bloyce and Smith stated that the government began to take a “ruthless approach” (2010: 143) from 2002 and they outlined the key features of the policy document Game Plan (DCMS, 2002) including plans to hold NGBs accountable for producing results, primarily focused on medal success but also growing participation, in exchange for public money.

In addition to their domestic role, NGBs “link British sport into the immensely complex international sporting community” (Houlihan, 1991: 117) through their affiliation with the international federation for their sport. British or English NGBs must be affiliated with their international federation in order to be internationally recognised and take part in international competitions. The interaction between the domestic and the international settings may be enhanced if there is a British member of an NGB who also holds a position at the international federation.

5.3.1 Relationships with the commercial sector

The pursuit of the development of commercial partnerships is of increasing significance to NGBs. The reasons for this have varied. Interviewee C, a senior official from a non-Olympic team sport (organisation NO1), described a lack of confidence in the longevity of public funding and therefore a perceived need for the NGB to create other income streams. He stated that while funding is assured for the
2013-2017 period, the funding comes “almost with the caveat that this is your [NGBs’] last chance guys” (Interview C, 19/03/2012). Similarly, interviewee C, a senior officer from a successful Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated that there was a concern that even if public funding of participation sport continues beyond the spending period 2013-2017, NGBs may not be the chosen mechanism for spending that money thereafter. Sport England is already beginning to use a mixed-economy approach in specific cases, which involves using organisations not affiliated to a NGB to deliver community sport.

Engagement with the commercial sector has grown considerably for many sports. Interviewee F, a senior officer from a commercially successful non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO2), described the importance of building a brand for the sport and the significance of commercial partners in that process. Interviewee J, senior officer from a non-Olympic sport organisation (organisation NO5), perceived that commercial awareness within the NGBs for Olympic and Paralympic sports remains limited due to those sports’ reliance on public funding. The majority of the NGBs interviewed that are engaged with the commercial sector described collaborative working with their commercial partners, rather than a traditional model of sponsorship involving an exchange of funds and advertising, thus demonstrating a growth of more complex relationships between sport and the commercial sector. For example, interviewee F gave the example of collaborative projects between the NGB and one of its commercial partners involving developing products including sunglasses and light-weight safety equipment in order to improve athletes’ performances and interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), described the work between the sport and a commercial partner on targeted programmes for increasing sport participation. The senior officer from NGB H, a large, non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO4), described the sport’s arrangement with one of its commercial partners in providing a new site for services that would benefit the sport and also mean that the commercial partner could establish a new location for its services available to the wider population, thus increasing its business opportunities.

Interviewee E, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB (organisation O4), stated that the funding that the sport receives from one of its commercial partners “is much more linked to the company’s business objectives” (Interview, 26/04/2012). There was also a desire on the part of the sports that they wanted to be associated with brands that reflected their values and the image of their sport and athletes that they wanted to see reflected to the public. Interviewee F, a senior official from a non-Olympic sport
(organisation NO2), gave examples of the NGB’s associations with a prestigious car company and a well-known sportswear brand and the importance for the NGB that people within the sport are associated with “the right brand” (Interview F, 16/05/2012).

The growth of working with commercial partners has also led sports to access alternative sources of funding within the sector such as from corporate social responsibility budgets, which has led sports to engage in activities relating to the companies’ objectives for corporate social responsibility. Interviewee C, a senior official from a non-Olympic team sport (organisation NO1), gave the example of the sport’s elite squad having been involved with education sessions relating to their commercial partner’s products and interviewee F, a senior official from a non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO2), described the sport’s elite squad’s involvement with charity projects jointly supported by the NGB and the commercial partner. In addition, commercial income has allowed some NGBs to reject guidelines for programmes from government agencies and fund alternative models: interviewee K, a senior officer from an Olympic sport (organisation O5), described the organisation setting up a commercially-funded programme to support young athletes, as an alternative to the lower tiers of WCPP funding.

However, the development of commercial partnerships has been challenging for some sports. Interviewee D, a senior official from a small Olympic NGB (organisation O3), reported that there had been some internal work to try to establish what the sport’s commercial value could be in order to look to attract a commercial partner. However, it was found that there was little commercial value to the sport in the current climate of the sport’s size and popularity in the UK and therefore the pursuit of a commercial partner was abandoned in favour of working on internal revenue production. Interviewee G, a senior official from non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO3), stated that the sport has found that its limited geographical scope made it difficult to attract a national, well-known company or brand to bring funds into the sport.

There was a perception from interviewees that international success made it easier for NGBs to attract commercial interest and that success equated to commercial value. Interviewee E, a senior officer from an Olympic sport NGB (organisation O4), stated that the sport’s commercial partnerships were stronger because “we are now perceived as a sport that can deliver medals on the world stage” (Interview E, 26/04/2012). Furthermore, the hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic
Games grew commercial interest in the sports involved in the Games. Interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O5), stated that commercial partners “got very excited” at the prospect of the London Games after the IOC’s decision in 2005 and agreed a higher value partnership with the sport as a result (Interview K, 30/10/2012).

An issue that was cited by interviewee K was that a sponsor had become too dominant: the lead sponsor for the sport was giving more money than the public funders and “dominated the brand” of the sport - this became an issue for other sponsors who invested a smaller amount of money and led to their brands not being associated with the sport as they did not want to have to use the name of the main sponsor (Interview K, 30/10/2012). The official stated that in the future the sport will look at an alternative model of sponsorship but acknowledged that the income from the dominant sponsor gave the sport great opportunities.

The relationship between the commercial and public sectors with regards to financial support for NGBs has faced problems. When the funding decision was made in 2006 to allocate additional resource to elite sport, there was an expectation that £100million of the funding required would be raised through engagement with the private sector but the financial crisis made this difficult. Additional public funding was made available in 2009 that reduced the funding gap to £50million and a programme called Team 2012, which sought to raise funds from the private sector in order to support athletes’ preparations for the Games (UK Sport, 2012a). The government’s willingness to cover part of the shortfall indicates the importance of the success of the British team to the government.

In 2010, there was a review, initiated by UK Sport and British Cycling, of the operations of British Cycling’s relationship with Sky. Specifically, the review examined the formation of the professional cycling team ‘Team Sky’ in order to ensure that this did not compromise the preparations for London 2012 and that there was appropriate use of public funds in the high performance work of British Cycling (Fotheringham, 2010). The review was carried out by Deloitte and concluded that British Cycling was managing the process appropriately and the roles and responsibilities of all parties in both the Olympic squad and the professional team were clear (British Cycling, 2011). Interviewee E, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O4), commented that the public bodies, UK Sport and Sport England, are not comfortable with NGBs engaging with the private sector: “The
tension in all this is the public funders almost resent commercial investment” (Interview E, 26/04/2012).

Some NGBs’ incomes have also been augmented by the sale of broadcasting rights. Not all sports benefit from this type of income but for those sports that do benefit, it can radically shape their operations. For example, interviewee F, a senior official from a commercially successful non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO2), reported that a four-year broadcasting deal has recently been secured which would account for the majority of their income for that period. This deal allows the NGB to plan for the future with a degree of confidence that is denied to sports that are reliant on public sector funding and shorter-term, less lucrative commercial deals. Interviewee J, a senior official from a non-Olympic sports organisation (organisation NO5), described the sport’s broadcasting deal as a seemingly mutually beneficial model for the sport and the broadcaster as it gave the sport the same longer-term assurances of their income, as described by interviewee F, but also gave the broadcaster a stronger platform for the growth of the business, including expanding into new markets as a result of its association with the sport.

As well as working with the commercial sector, at times sports have found that they must work in competition with the commercial sector in order to protect their own interests. Interviewee A, a senior official from an Olympic sport (organisation O1), stated that the growth of the private health and fitness industry has led the NGB to develop products accredited by and affiliated to the NGB for use in the private sector so that they can achieve a market share of the growth. However, interviewee F, a senior official from a non-Olympic sport (organisation NO2), noted that experiences of private clubs set up in their sport had been positive and the senior officer commented about non-affiliated clubs and academies: “As long as they’re not antagonistic to us and they’re promoting our sport in the right way, with proper coaching and in a safe environment, then that’s ok” (Interview F, 16/05/2012). Interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O3), described efforts by the organisation to have more influence over the activities of commercial operators in the sport to ensure that participation statistics were being fully captured and there are standards in delivery. However, this is not for the purpose of removing the commercial competition: “We don’t want to control them or destroy them… we just want to be more influential” (Interview D, 02/04/2012).
This section has shown that many relationships between sports organisations and the commercial sector have become more sophisticated and there are many examples of these relationships moving away from a traditional model of sponsorship. Some sports are seeking to move more towards partnerships with the commercial sector and seeking benefits beyond simply financial gains, with examples including product development and growing participation. Furthermore, some sports are becoming part of the commercial sector by developing their own commercially viable products, rather than simply being beneficiaries of the marketplace. However, there are also examples of sports not being attractive to the commercial sector and therefore having limited opportunities to benefit financially. While sports’ relationships with the commercial sector do not directly influence public policy in elite sport, these relationships can shape the NGBs’ operations, as they have to meet the demands of their funders, both public and private. Overall the increase in partnerships and links with the commercial sector has not changed the NGBs’ heavy dependence on public financial support, especially for Olympic sports.

5.3.2 Relationship with the government and its agencies

One of the key government-led developments for many NGBs has been the establishment of National Lottery funding and public money being channelled directly into sport. Interviewee B, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated that the success that the sport has seen “has been fuelled by the support we’ve had from UK Sport and Sport England” (Interview B, 01/03/2012) and the funding that these two bodies distribute from the National Lottery. The significance of the funding from the government varies between sports: for some it accounts for a large proportion of their income and for others it is one of many income streams and accounts for relatively little compared with their commercial income. Some sports do not receive funding from both UK Sport and Sport England due to UK Sport’s policy of only funding Olympic and Paralympic sports.

The assessments of UK Sport expressed by the interviewees from NGBs were generally positive. The main point that was praised was UK Sport’s consistently clear strategy of Olympic and Paralympic success and the clear objectives that NGBs must fulfil in order to receive public funding and other support services. Interviewee B, a senior officer from a successful Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated that UK Sport has “broadly had the same strategy now for the last 12 years, which has been
about Olympic and Paralympic success” (Interview B, 01/03/2012) and interviewee A, also from an Olympic sport (organisation O1), stated that UK Sport had a “smaller remit” (Interview A, 16/02/2012) and it was effective in fulfilling this. However, interviewee D, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB (organisation O3), was not as supportive and stated that while the funding from UK Sport was important, the organisation offered little else in terms of support for NGBs. Interviewee K, a senior officer from a popular Olympic sport (organisation O5), stated that UK Sport should only have an audit function in order to monitor government spending and did not need to have all the functions and employees that exist in the organisation currently. In the cases of sports that are not part of the UK Sport funded WCPP, the financial element of the programme was less important than the perceived opportunities for lobbying government through UK Sport. Non-Olympic NGBs reported that as a result of them being outside of the UK Sport funding programme they lacked a voice into government on issues relating to the elite side of their sports. Interviewee G, a senior officer from a popular, non-Olympic team sport (organisation NO3), stated that UK Sport should see their sport’s World Cup as being of equal importance to the Olympic Games, but as the sport is not part of the Olympic Games it is marginalised.

NGBs’ opinions of Sport England were more mixed. A common issue that arose when describing relations with Sport England was that it lacked the consistency of approach that UK Sport demonstrated. There were concerns about Sport England’s short-term projects and priorities, which meant that NGBs often have to change their work to align with Sport England’s priorities in order to protect their funding. As stated by interviewee B, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), “everyone thinks they’ve got the magic bullet and they come along every two years and think they’re going to find the idea that all of a sudden is going to transform sport” (Interview B, 01/03/2012). Some comments by interviewees suggested that the issues that sports experienced with Sport England was the fault of the government and its unclear and/or frequently changing priorities that made Sport England’s role unstable. For example, interviewee B, a senior officer from interviewed from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated that the changing definition of ‘sport’ created problems and interviewee A, also from an Olympic NGB (organisation O1), described Sport England’s overall remit as prescribed by government as “nebulous” (Interview, 16/02/2012).

An issue for the future that was cited by interviewees from NGBs was that the government’s new strategy for sport focuses on people aged 14 to 25 years. This,
coupled with the removal of ring-fenced funding for school sport partnerships (SSPs) was seen as a potential barrier to developing sport for young people because the NGBs will no longer receive funding to support people under the age of 14 years. Interviewee E, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB (organisation O4), stated “there ought to be someone looking at sport from the cradle to the grave” (Interview E, 26/04/2012). Similarly, interviewee C, a senior officer from a non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO1), was also critical of this policy and stated “if you’re going to engage people to have a lifetime in sport then you’ve got to start before 14” (Interview C, 19/03/2012). So there is a disconnection between the government’s sport policy and the needs perceived by the NGBs.

Interviewee A, a senior officer from an Olympic sport (organisation O1), stated that the disconnection between the responsibilities held by Sport England and UK Sport was problematic for the sport because of the division between the devolved home country responsibilities concerning mass participation and the UK responsibilities for elite sport. In the case of this sport, there are two NGBs governing the sport and receiving money from the government’s agencies: one NGB for England and one for the UK. This dislocation of responsibilities was also cited as problematic by interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O3), who stated that in the previous funding cycle (2005-2009) the sport had received significant levels of funding from UK Sport to develop the elite end of the sport but little support from Sport England. However this NGB now receives similar levels of funding for both elite and participation sport and is therefore able to develop the sport more holistically.

Modernisation has been an ongoing process of reviewing systems and standards and the NGBs reported that they expect scrutiny of their governance and financial management to increase in the next funding cycle. Interviewees B, from organisation O2, and C, from organisation NO1, referred to an expected increase in scrutiny from their public funders in the funding period 2013-2017. Interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic sport NGB (organisation O2), specifically mentioned that value for money had become of greater importance to the new government and that as a result UK Sport and Sport England were more interested in finding out exactly what the NGBs were doing in order to achieve their results, rather than solely focusing on the results. Interviewee C, a senior official from a non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO1), stated that Sport England in particular had started to place greater emphasis
on the NGBs giving evidence of the causal links between the Sport England funding and the results that were being achieved in increasing participation.

An issue highlighted by interviewee Q, a senior official from a national non-government sports organisation, was the pressure put on the governance structures of NGBs as a result of their relationships with the government through Sport England and UK Sport. There are various recommendations and rules for governance of NGBs in order to ensure that they are transparent in their spending of public money, which can be very time consuming. Interviewee Q stated that there is a temptation for one or two of the more commercially successful NGBs to refuse the public money in favour of private funding, as there will be fewer demands placed on the organisation by a private funder than by the government agencies. However, this is not an option for all NGBs as many rely heavily on their public funding in order to exist and “it’s very difficult to argue against all of the hoops you’re asked to jump through for meeting those demands” (Interview Q, 08/04/2013). In addition, the requirements placed on NGBs in exchange for their public funding are often changed so “you get pulled all over the place” (Interview Q, 08/04/2013), which can mean some priorities of the NGB are overlooked.

This relationship with public funders also raises a serious question for NGBs about their accountability: are they accountable to their funders or their members? Interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), highlighted that the sport’s funders are diverse and include both the public and private sectors and that the sport has to fulfil requirements from all funders and provide a good return on investment. In addition, that the sport’s elite, international competitors are members of the NGB alongside thousands of non-elite participants across the country and the NGB has to find a balance in their operations to fulfil the needs and expectations of a diverse population within the membership, as well as serving the sport’s funders. With regards to the balance between the interests of funders and members, interviewee B stated “the challenge for us is 90% of our revenue is tied up in what UK Sport and Sport England want to do and the danger is you end up serving that at the expense of the people who are actually making the sport happen” (Interview B, 01/03/2012).

Interviewees were asked about the merging of UK Sport and Sport England that was proposed by the Coalition government (though the plan was eventually abandoned). Interviewee C, a senior office from a non-Olympic sport (organisation NO1), stated
that the proposed merged organisation could create a stronger lobby for sport by becoming a “super voice representing the whole dynamic of sport” (Interview C, 19/03/2012). Interviewee D, a senior officer from an Olympic sport (organisation O3), was also in favour of a merged body because the current situation with different stakeholder groups was a “nightmare” (Interview, 02/04/2012). However, interviewee F, a senior officer from a non-Olympic sport (organisation NO2), viewed the proposals as a step backwards for sport. Similarly, interviewee K, a senior officer from an Olympic sport NGB (organisation O5), disagreed with the merger and called Sport England and UK Sport “oil and water organisations” (Interview K, 30/10/2012).

Interviewee E, a senior officer from an Olympic sport (organisation O4), argued that the number of organisations was not the biggest issue but rather that the government’s involvement in sport is not properly led and there should be one strategy that has clear priorities and purpose to ensure clarity of responsibilities and prevent overlapping work. The example that was given was coach education: UK Sport, Sport England and sportscoachUK are all doing some form of development of coach education, which creates a difficult operating environment for NGBs. In addition, interviewees B and K, both representing Olympic sport NGBs (organisations O2 and O5 respectively), mentioned the need for longer-term planning for sport. Interviewee K stated that the government should think about developing a longer-term strategy: “There’s no 2050 vision for sport and we can’t do it on our own” (Interview K, 30/10/2012).

5.3.3 The impact of London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

All of the NGBs interviewed were asked about the impact of the hosting of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London regardless of their status as Olympic/Paralympic sports or not. The majority of the opinions on the London 2012 Games were positive, even from non-Olympic sports. Interviewees C and F, both of whom are senior officers from non-Olympic sports NGBs (organisations NO1 and NO2 respectively), stated that the level of interest in sport as a whole that had been brought about by the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games has been of benefit, especially in terms of government awareness and increased public funding for sport. In addition, as mentioned in a previous section, the hosting of the Games in the UK meant that Olympic/Paralympic sports were able to secure lucrative commercial income. Interviewee E, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB
(organisation O4), stated that the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and other programmes associated with the Games have brought about change for the sport: as well as the focus on the elite side of the sport and the financial support from UK Sport, there have been other opportunities for the sport in terms of non-elite objectives, in particular the opportunity to develop young officials and volunteers through the UK School Games.

However, interviewee C, a senior officer from a non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO1) stated that the sport’s status as non-Olympic had meant that as well as missing out on lucrative support such as UK Sport funding, it had also been excluded from Games-related activities such as the UK School Games, which had focused on Olympic sports. Interviewee G, a senior officer from a non-Olympic sport NGB (organisation NO3), stated that the focus on Olympic sports was limiting opportunities for domestic media coverage and sponsorship in the sport, as it is not part of the Olympic Games. Interviewee F, also from a non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO2), cited a more global disadvantage of not being involved with the Olympics in that it limited the opportunities for the sport to become truly international, as the Olympic Games is seen as a vehicle for promoting a sport in countries where it is not traditionally played. In addition, interviewees C and G noted that they might lose participants, including high-level competitors, from their sport if people were inspired by the sports that they see during the Olympic Games and choose to participate in Olympic sports rather than remaining as participants in a non-Olympic sport.

While the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games were important drivers for sport, interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O5), noted that the future hosting of major events for the sport is now a key focus for the NGB because hosting such events, for example, the sport’s World Championships, in the UK is seen as an important motivating factor for competitors who are deciding whether or not to invest their time into trying to be the best in the world. The interviewee stated that there are competitors “who didn’t make the London team, who potentially we might have lost from the sport but now we might keep them because we’ve got another home Games” (Interview K, 30/10/2012).

There were some further general comments about the importance of elite success in driving the broad range of objectives that the NGBs have in their remits. Interviewees F and G, both of whom are senior officer from non-Olympic NGBs (organisations
NO2 and NO3 respectively), indicated a strong sense of their sport being driven by the elite end of the sport. Interviewee F commented that the national squad “drives our entire business” of the NGB (Interview F, 16/05/2012) and interviewee G stated that the sport’s elite domestic league is responsible for much of the sport’s income and its media profile. As well as driving the business side of the sport, elite success is seen as a catalyst for increasing participation: interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic sport (organisation O3), stated that even a little bit of success in the Olympic Games would do more for the sport than four years’ worth of participation initiatives.

5.4 Other national sports organisations

Beyond the government and its agencies and the governing bodies that hold responsibility for a specific sport or set of sports, there are other organisations that contribute to the elite sport policy landscape. As noted in the introduction, third-sector organisations such as charities have a role to play in the delivery of sport policy in the UK, particularly for community sport. In the policy document, *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* (DCMS, 2012a), a partnership between an NGB, Badminton England, and a charity, StreetGames, is highlighted as a good example for developing sustainable, local sports provision. Another example is the Youth Sport Trust (YST), which is a key organisation in the landscape of youth and school sport that took a lead role in the development and delivery of PESSCL and PESSYP under the previous Labour government.

The British Olympic Association (BOA) and British Paralympic Association (BPA) are important organisations within the elite sport policy landscape. The mandates of these organisations are dictated by the international organisations that they belong to, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and International Paralympic Committee (IPC) respectively. Part of the mandate for all national committees is that they must remain independent from their nation’s government but they are affected by the government’s policy of prioritising elite sport success as it means that there is a higher level of achievement and a more established development process of elite athletes than there has been in the past so the British teams perform better at Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Lobby groups have been an important part of the sport policy landscape and Houlihan (1991) highlighted the significance of lobbying for the development of the
PE national curriculum. In the past, the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR), now known as the Sport and Recreation Alliance (SRA), has been particularly active in lobbying government but the organisation’s role has been marginalised by the sports councils. The SRA works with over 320 organisations and describes its role in the landscape as having the responsibility to “speak up on their [the members’] behalf, represent their views and to provide them with services which make their life easier” (Sport and Recreation Alliance\textsuperscript{12}). The SRA provides secretariat services to the government’s All Party Parliamentary Group for Sport so there is a direct link with government. Some NGBs also have direct links to government via All Party Parliamentary Groups, via MPs with specific interests in their sport and sometimes due to direct relationships between the senior officials and the government. Interviewee A, a senior official from an Olympic sport NGB (organisation O1), stated that he is comfortable taking on a lobbying role rather than contacting the government via the sports councils or the SRA: “I’m accountable for this sport as chief executive, I’m accountable to my Board, I’m going to go and do it. Why would I use a third party?” (Interview A, 16/02/2012). However, interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O3), felt it was not the CEO’s responsibility to lobby directly: “I think it’s a little bit above my pay grade and I fail to see how a chief executive from [this NGB] wandering in to parliament is going to have any influence” (Interview D, 02/04/2012).

Universities are important parts of the landscape of elite sport in the UK. Many sports have their NGB headquarters on university sites, as well as basing their high performance training programmes at universities in order to make use of facilities. For example, British Bobsleigh and Pentathlon GB both have their head offices and their performance programmes based at the University of Bath. British triathlon, British Swimming and the Amateur Swimming Association are amongst the NGBs with headquarters at Loughborough University while British Athletics base their high performance programme on the site and British Weightlifting have their high performance centre at Leeds Metropolitan University. Also in the sport of netball, the University of Bath and Loughborough University both host teams in the England Netball Superleague franchise, Team Bath and Loughborough Lightning respectively. Universities can also be sites for programmes to be implemented; in particular the TASS programmes support elite performers who are enrolled at university or college.

\textsuperscript{12} http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/about accessed 23/06/2014
5.4.1 Relationships with government

A potential issue for third sector organisations is if they are too closely aligned with government policy, and therefore dependent on government resource, and the policy changes, the organisation can suffer. For example, when the Coalition government ceased to fund School Sport Partnerships and the associated programmes, the YST had to make employees redundant because it lost such a significant part of its income and no longer had the mandate from government to deliver policy.

There can also be challenges where the remits of non-government organisations overlap with government and/or its agencies. Within elite sport, public funding is distributed to NGBs via UK Sport for sports to develop their elite athletes and systems to support those athletes but when it comes to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, it is the responsibility of the BOA and BPA to select the teams and support the athletes through the Games, not the NGBs or UK Sport. However, ahead of the Olympic Games in 2012, UK Sport stated a target for how many medals it expected the team to win, while the BOA did not even though it is technically the BOA’s team. This can cause tension between the two organisations and confusion within the different actors in the elite sport landscape. Interviewee S, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, described this tension: “one organisation is deemed to own the investment and therefore has set a target against it. The other one is ultimately held responsible for that and that’s an incredibly problematic circumstance” (Interview S, 03/06/2013).

5.5 Conclusion

The first conclusion that can be drawn from this examination of stakeholders in the elite sport policy landscape is the significance of modernisation. Labour’s policy of modernising sport, amongst other public organisations and services, has had long-term and far-reaching effects. All NGBs funded by UK Sport and Sport England had to modernise their operations, as well as UK Sport and Sport England themselves. The result is a group of ‘disciplined’ organisations that government can work with. In the context of a Conservative-led government, a party that is traditionally in favour of a smaller government, and the financial crisis that has led to significant public funding cuts, DCMS has a smaller staff than during the Labour government so there is significant reliance on UK Sport to manage elite sport and report to government, which indicates a certain confidence in the organisation. To reflect on the Multiple
Streams Framework, the state of sport organisations as a result of modernisation provides a solution (policy stream) to the issue of underperformance in sport both in terms of governance concerns and failures on the field of play (problem stream) in the context of a government preference for a business-like approach to public services and strong public support for elite sport success (political stream).

A second conclusion is the significance of funding streams. Some sports have been able to secure significant private sector investment but the majority of Olympic sports remain heavily dependent on public funding. This funding context, coupled with the significance of modernisation, provides both a structure for policymaking and delivery and also an important power relationship. UK Sport’s role in the sport policy landscape primarily as a funder and monitor of public spending on elite sport means that it can decide which organisations and sports are part of the WCPP based on their performance. This links to Lukes’ second dimension of power because UK Sport can remove certain actors from the landscape and prevent issues being addressed but the organisation can do this in an overt and legitimate way. UK Sport and the government can ignore the House of Lords recommendation regarding altering the No Compromise approach because of the fact that the process is working and producing results.

Finally, the policy continuity in terms of the government’s funding of sport and confidence in UK Sport as a partner to deliver its objectives combined with the hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has created an institution for elite sport both in the more traditional sense of a structure of organisations and also in relation to the New Institutionalist notion of an embedded value of elite sport success in the UK. The development of structures and the continuing prioritisation of the policy of supporting and funding elite sport suggest the potential for a path dependency exists.
Chapter 6 – Youth Talent Search and Development

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is policy in relation to the identification and development of talented young people both in schools and in the community setting and how this element of the elite sport policy landscape has developed since the late 1990s. The data will be presented under headings associated with the key features of policy landscape: organisations, particularly the programmes and partnerships within key organisations; funding; and political salience.

Talent identification and development (TID) as a specific strand of the process of developing elite athletes has been prominent in British elite sport policy since the establishment of the World Class Start and World Class Potential programmes in 1998. These programmes were managed by Sport England and designed to develop a more systematic approach for the identification and nurturing of young talented people in order to form a foundation below the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP) (Houlihan and White, 2002; Sport England, 2006). These programmes were absorbed into the WCPP and responsibility for their management was transferred to UK Sport in 2006 (Sport England, 2006; UK Sport, 2012) after which the three levels of the WCPP were known as Talent, Development and Podium.

The inclusion of talent identification in elite sport policy has been described by Green (2004) as being influenced by the work of other countries, most notably Australia and its ‘Talent Search’ programme and an example of the process of policy transfer has taken place (see also Bloyce and Smith 2010). Green and Houlihan (2005: 35) described the Talent Search programme as “a computerised model of talent identification and development”, which formed part of the Olympic Athlete Programme and which relied on a network of organisations and institutions including schools and national sports organisations for the implementation of the programme. The receptiveness of UK sports organisations to a more systematic approach to talent search was increased by the emphasis given to the development of pathways in two policy documents. According to Green (2004) the first was the publication of the Labour government’s sport policy A Sporting Future for All in 2000 and the second was the Elite Sport Funding Review published by the DCMS in 2001. Green (2004) highlighted the introduction of a requirement for NGBs to develop talent pathways as a significant element of A Sporting Future for All (DCMS, 2000) and
noted that the *Elite Sport Funding Review* (Cunningham, 2001) concluded that additional efforts for TID were required.

In *A Sporting Future for All*, there was a clear statement of intent by the government for NGBs to focus on talent: “As part of our modernising partnerships, we will ask governing bodies to create a national talent development plan identifying pathways from grassroots of their sport to the international stage” (DCMS, 2000: 15). Furthermore, Cunningham (2001: 5) identified that many sports were failing to support talented young people and stated “Developing talented youngsters should not be a matter of chance. It requires a well structured sports specific plan which links grassroots participation to international excellence by defining critical steps along the way.” The political salience of youth talent development continued to grow in the following years. Bloyce and Smith (2010: 144) stated that since London won the bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, “TID has become a more obvious and central feature of the ESD [elite sport development] policy in the UK.” The cumulative effects of government policy statements and the awarding of the Olympic Games to London was to embed the importance of TID within the system. A more systematic approach has been developed due to the pressures on sports to deliver results rapidly and regularly in return for their public funding. Additional pressure has come from the intensification of international competition and the significant increase of investment in elite athlete development by many of the UK’s competitors (Houlihan and Zheng, 2013).

Outside of the UK, the SPLISS study (De Bosscher et al, 2008) found that despite increased investment in elite sport systems across a range of countries, there was little evidence of systematic talent identification although it was noted that there was considerable variation between sports. Crucially, the study highlighted that none of the countries used processes involving systematic assessment of the sporting potential of people outside of sports’ existing participants in order to identify talent, an approach that was used by former communist nations. Seeking to identify talent outside of a specific sport is becoming more common and is known as ‘talent search’ or ‘talent transfer’: this will be discussed in detail in chapter seven.

*The impact of the growth in international youth sport competition*

As stated in the previous chapter, is it important to acknowledge the international context of UK elite sport policymaking. In the case of young people, there has been a
growth in the range of events targeting young people in both sport-specific and multi-sport contexts at the international level. Many international federations have held championships for specific age groups for a long time but there has been a growth in the number of large-scale multi-sport competitions over the past 10-15 years. Age-group competitions are structured differently between international federations. For example, in athletics the IAAF holds world championships at ‘youth’ (under 17 years) and ‘junior’ (under 19 years) levels and there is a further level of ‘Under-23’ at the level of European championships. In football, FIFA holds under-17 and under-20 world cup tournaments.

In terms of multi-sport events for young elite performers, British teams compete in the Australian Youth Olympic Festival (AYOF) and the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF). The EYOF was held in Brussels, Belgium for the first time in 1991 and is open to 14-18 year old boys and girls from European nations that are members of The European Olympic Committees (EOC)\(^\text{13}\). The AYOF was established following Sydney’s hosting of the 2000 Olympic Games and is for 13-19 year olds\(^\text{14}\). In 2013, the British Olympic Committee (BOA) took 114 athletes to compete in 11 sports to the AYOF (British Olympic Committee, 2013a) and took 44 athletes to the EYOF, which was held in Utrecht in the Netherlands (British Olympic Committee, 2013b). Interviewee V, a representative of a non-governmental national sports organisation, stated that these events provide important opportunities to experience a large-scale, international, multi-sport event as well as competitive opportunities for young athletes. The same interviewee stated that British involvement in the AYOF was particularly important because of the relationship between the British and Australian Olympic committees and also that the event can provide an opportunity for warm weather training for some sports as it is held in the British winter months.

The most significant recent developments have been in international multi-sport competitions with the introduction of the Commonwealth Youth Games (CYG) and the Youth Olympic Games (YOG), which began in 2000 and 2010 respectively and are open to competitors up to the age of 18 years in a selected set of sports. There is also a winter edition of the Youth Olympic Games, which was held for the first time in Innsbruck, Austria in 2012. At the inaugural summer edition of the Youth Olympic


Games in Singapore in 2010, 3600 athletes from 205 countries took part in the Games\textsuperscript{15}. The next edition of the summer Games will be hosted in Nanjing, China in 2014 and will host 28 sports\textsuperscript{16}. Table 6.1 indicates the growth of the Commonwealth Youth Games. Although it will be demonstrated the level of support among Olympic NGBs is variable, the growth in the number elite youth international events has received a degree of government support (at least at the devolved level) in terms of hosting, as illustrated by Edinburgh’s hosting of the Commonwealth Youth Games and Glasgow’s bid to host the 2018 Youth Olympic Games.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Host city</th>
<th>No. sports</th>
<th>No. countries</th>
<th>No. athletes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Edinburgh, Scotland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Bendigo, Australia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>&gt;1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Pune, India</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Isle Of Man</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The Commonwealth Games Federation\textsuperscript{17}

In terms of British and English representation at these events, due to the age of athletes that compete, there may be a mixture of athletes in terms of their positioning within the England Talent Pathway or the World Class Performance programme as neither programme explicitly includes or excludes athletes according to age. Interviewee M, a senior representative from a government-funded national sports organisation, explained that some athletes may be at the stage of 'Development' within the World Class Performance programme while others may be at the top of their home country talent pathway (Interview M, 07/01/2013).

The significance of success at junior-level competitions has not been found to be uniform. In some cases, competing at junior level international competitions may be the pinnacle of the young person’s sporting career, while others may be competing at a higher level already. When discussing the Youth Olympic Games, interviewee M, stated “I think it’s just another event, which may be a meaningful, high-priority competitive opportunity for those young athletes or it may not.” (Interview M, 07/01/2013). Furthermore, the emphasis on these competitions may be problematic for the development of the young athlete as the intensity of training in order to achieve a junior international title may be detrimental in the longer-term. Interviewee

\textsuperscript{15} http://www.olympic.org/news/what-is-yog/195805 accessed 23/06/2014  
\textsuperscript{17} http://www.thecgf.com/cyg/ accessed 23/06/2014
K, a senior official from a traditional, popular Olympic sport NGB (organisation O5), stated that coaches often give inappropriately high training workloads to young athletes that can lead to injury: “[we] get very excited about the idea of having a World Junior Champion on their books and we break them” (Interview K, 30/10/2012).

The extent to which the growth in elite youth international competition has added to the complexity of the elite sport landscape is illustrated by the research of Skille and Houlihan (2014) who reported that two of the larger Olympic sports, both successful sports in British terms, cycling and swimming, found that it is of greater developmental value for their young elite athletes to attend junior-level sport-specific competitions staged by the international federations or to attend the Commonwealth Games rather than the Youth Olympic Games as they are more competitive and fit better with the NGBs' development structures. The British team that went to the first Youth Olympic Games in 2010 had no representatives from cycling and only two swimmers. However, interviewee V, a representative of national non-government sports organisation, was complimentary about the standard of competition at the Youth Olympic Games and highlighted that the qualification standards for some sports for the 2014 edition of the Games are very high.

The growth of the complexity of the international competitive landscape is mirrored, though to a lesser extent, at the domestic level. The School Games and its predecessor, the UK School Games (UKSG) have been significant in the development of high level competitive sport opportunities for school-aged children. Melville (2012: 8), in analysing the development of the UKSG, reported the comments of the former sports minister, Richard Caborn, who stated that his aim was to have an event that “could provide talented young people with the experience they needed to perform well at high-profile multi-sport competitions.” The UKSG was incorporated into the Labour government’s plans for achieving a legacy as a result of hosting the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: the government stated that the UKSG was “designed to replicate the feel of major events such as the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games” (DCMS, 2008b: 22). The event was adapted following the election of the coalition government in 2010 and the new event, the School Games, began in 2012. The government stated “the School Games provides a framework for competitive school sport at school, district, county and national levels” (DCMS, 2012a: 3-4). Although both the UKSG and the School Games were significant innovations in the youth sport landscape, their significance in
terms of elite youth sport was more ambiguous as both were more concerned with
the promotion of competitive sport among young people than talent development.

A key point to consider when examining talent development in sport is how the term
is defined by government and NGBs. In the Coalition Government’s sport policy
document *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life*, talent is mentioned briefly as one of the
elements to be incorporated into NGBs’ Whole Sport Plans funded by Sport England:
“High quality talent development to create a better talent pool and help those with
real potential to make the grade” (DCMS, 2012a: 9). This description does not offer a
concrete definition of the terms ‘talent’ or ‘talent development’ and the phrases “real
potential” and “make the grade” are unclear. Interviewee T, a senior official from a
national sports programme, raised this issue with specific reference to Sport England
and UK Sport and how their respective work links together in this area because Sport
England’s aims around talent are to retain and develop people within the England
Talent Pathway structure, while UK Sport operates a higher level of performance with
its key aim to win medals at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as determined by
their remits prescribed by DCMS. There is potentially a wide gap between the two
organisations’ definitions of talent and therefore the programmes they implement
under this heading.

While it is not within the scope of this research to examine the nuances of the
science of talent identification, it should be noted that the sport-specific organisations
that were interviewed as part of the data collection process held differing views on
the process and success of talent identification. Interviewee J, a senior officer from a
non-Olympic sports organisation (organisation NO5), described the process of talent
identification as beginning at a young age – as young as 5 years old – and involving
a long journey of managing that talent to senior level. Interviewee A, a senior official
from an Olympic NGB (organisation O1), agreed that talent identification is important
within the sport but stated that it is possible to identify talented people as late as
university age. Interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation
O3), had a completely different view and stated that talent identification within this
particular sport “is a disaster” because while talent can be identified, talented young
people are often trained too hard, too quickly and encouraged to train and compete
at senior level too early (Interview K, 30/10/2012).

The international and domestic youth elite sport competition infrastructure is a
significant component of the elite sport landscape and is illustrative of the growing
complexity of the environment within which NGBs have to operate. Other significant
elements in the landscape are the networks of organisations and programmes within which elite youth TID takes place.

6.2 Organisations, programmes and partnerships

At an organisational level, the identification and development of youth talent involves a network of partnerships and programmes across the country. NGBs receive funding through Sport England, which is responsible for supporting the development of the England Talent Pathway. Personnel within UK Sport offer advice and guidance on talent development, and both Sport England and UK Sport advise on the School Games, which is managed by a group of organisations including the Youth Sport Trust (YST). Youth elite sport is less self-contained than other elements of the sport policy sub-sector because it intersects with other policy areas especially education, which sets the curriculum for physical education and makes recommendations about school management and priorities, but also health policy with regards to physical activity and welfare policy with regards to issues such as citizenship and volunteering.

The allocation of responsibility for the talent pathway between the non-departmental public bodies UK Sport and Sport England has changed over time. The situation was described by interviewee Q, a senior official from a national non-government sports organisation, as a “turf war” about deciding how far up the performance pathway Sport England’s responsibilities should reach, and conversely how far down the pathway UK Sport should operate (Interview Q, 08/04/2013). In 2006 the responsibility for the first two levels of the WCPP, known as ‘talent’ and ‘development’, was transferred from Sport England to UK Sport. This decision was taken because UK Sport began to plan their investment over two Olympic cycles and therefore there was a shift to include funding for those athletes expected to excel at the Olympic Games up to 8 years away. Interviewee R\(^\text{18}\), a senior figure in British sport, described this change as allowing UK Sport to create “a unified view of elite sport” (interview R, 02/05/2013). At the same time, responsibly for the English Institute of Sport (EIS) also transferred to UK Sport from Sport England (UK Sport, 2012). However, despite greater clarity of responsibility between the two organisations, evidence of a ‘turf war’ re-emerged. In Sport England’s 2008-2011

\(^{18}\) Interviewee R has held many positions within sport in the UK including being an elite athlete and a senior official for a number of different government and non-government sports organisations over many years and therefore is not referred to in this research as representing a specific organisation.
strategy the organisation indicated that talent was a priority and the development of the England Talent Pathway began in 2009. However, this did not remove responsibility for talent from UK Sport but rather UK Sport’s work became more focused on programmes around talent transfer and fast-tracking of talented athletes, which will be discussed in detail in chapter seven. Although Sport England and UK Sport promoted the broad strategic framework for the development of youth TID programmes, the design and delivery of the programmes often involved a range of other policy actors who, to varying degrees, shared the priorities of the two government agencies. The following section explores the role of schools in the TID process.

### 6.2.1 The education context: schools

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) has been involved with a number of youth TID programmes and partnerships in recent years and currently still plays a significant role. Under the previous government’s Physical Education and Sport Strategy for Young People (PESSYP) programme and the School Sport Partnership (SSPs) infrastructure, YST had a significant role in supporting schools to deliver the Gifted and Talented stream of the programme. However, the deprioritising of the programme by the Coalition government has meant that YST’s input in this area has been marginalised. There was significant resistance to the removal of funding for SSPs, including a petition signed by 600,000 people (Davies, 2010) and the programme received a short reprieve but ceased to be funded beyond the end of the 2012/2013 academic year. This is indicative of what Kingdon termed the ‘national mood’ but the mood alone was not sufficient to alter the government’s policy.

Interviewee N, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, stated that some SSPs and individual schools have been able to continue elements of the PESSYP programme but that they have to prioritise certain elements and theGifted and Talented work stream is often seen as “a luxury” (Interview N, 29/01/2013). The Gifted and Talented programme was generally viewed as making a positive contribution but Bailey, Morley and Dismore (2009) found that provision was patchy, mainly due to teachers’ limited skills and knowledge in relation to the identification of potential talent and the fact that students could only be identified as talented in the sports and activities that were available within their specific school. Since 2010, the lack of infrastructure and systematic approach has resulted in
teachers returning to processes employed before PESSYP and its predecessor, PESSCL, of encouraging talented young people to join a local club. However, according to interviewee N, the lack of effective relationships between many schools and clubs means that the teachers are not necessarily familiar with the quality of the club they recommend. So while the general direction of policy around TID set by Sport England and NGBs has been to create a more systematic approach, this has been weakened by the diminished capacity of schools to fulfil their role. The marginalisation of the role of schools in the youth talent landscape has not been without challenge. As recently as 2013 the House of Commons select committee report on school sport made the following recommendation: “all schools develop a plan for the development of their gifted and talented pupils” (House of Commons Education Committee, 2013: 46). However, there is no evidence of this recommendation having altered the current policy of the government. One justification given by the government for not reinstating the Gifted and Talented element of PESSYP is that this function is fulfilled by the hierarchy of the School Games, which is designed to increase the number of young people taking part in competitive sport.

The coalition government introduced the School Games in 2010. It was piloted in nine areas in England during the 2010-11 academic year, and then implemented nationwide in the 2011-12 academic year (DCMS 2012b). The purpose of the School Games is “to motivate and inspire millions of young people… of all ages, abilities and backgrounds” (DCMS, 2012a: 5). The programme is divided in to four levels, as shown in Table 6.2 and it is managed and delivered by a group of government and non-government partners, as outlined in Table 6.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Sporting competition for all students through intra-school competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Individuals and teams are selected to represent their schools in local inter-school competitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>The county/area will stage multi-sport School Games festivals as a culmination of year-round school sport competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>The Sainsbury’s School Games finals: a national multi-sport event where the most talented young people in the UK will be selected to compete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source DCMS (2012b: 4)

Table 6.3 – Roles and responsibilities of key partners for School Games management and delivery.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department/Organisation</th>
<th>Roles and responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DCMS</td>
<td>Overall policy leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DoE and DoH Support role
Sport England Distribution of National Lottery funds
Engagement of NGBs and County Sport Partnerships
British Paralympic Association Paralympic vision and inspiration
Youth Sport Trust Support development in schools, clubs and local partners

Source DCMS (2012b)

While the government’s aim for the School Games was to achieve inspiration and inclusion, it was suggested by interviewee N, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, that this programme also had the potential to generate a larger talent pool of young people due to increased opportunities for competitive sport and therefore it can make a contribution to talent identification even though it is not an explicit rationale set out by government. This is an example of what Dery (1999) termed policytaking.

The changes to the role of schools in elite youth sport TID were affected significantly by the policy decisions generated within the education policy sector concerning deregulation (removing the obligation for schools to take part in SSPs) and the promotion of a competitive ethic. Both these changes required substantial adaptation by actors in the landscape, such as the YST, who were concerned who protect the role of schools in the TID process and the contributions, limited though it tended to be, made by the Gifted and Talented programme. Attention consequently focused on the School Games, which an opportunity to examine competition structures within school sport to ensure that there were not clashes or multiple competition programmes running in parallel with partner NGBs. To avoid any clashes, consultation took place with NGBs regarding competition formats for the School Games.

There was scepticism about the value of the School Games among national sports organisations, particularly those concerned with youth/school sport. Interviewee Q, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, stated that the School Games was “a disappointment” as a policy when it was first announced because the announcement coincided with the removal of funding for the School Sport Partnerships and many people did not like the message of the emphasis on competitive sport and it was “the only thing in town” for school sport at the time (Interview Q, 08/04/2013). Even among NGBs that are part of the programme, there was some questioning of the value of the School Games. Interviewee E, a senior official from a traditional, popular Olympic NGB (organisation O4), was unconvinced
by the change from UK School Games to School Games and the underpinning rationale and stated “I almost feel we’ve changed it for the sake of changing it... I thought the old model was pretty good” (interviewee E, 26/04/2012). Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, described the issue of government ministers under pressure to make announcements and be viewed by the public as doing something and making positive change when it is not really necessary and that this can cause tension between the government and the various agencies, particularly schools and NGBs, involved in sport policy and delivery.

Interviewee T, a senior official from national sports programme, was unconvinced of the contribution of school-based programmes to the development of the highest level of youth talent. This scepticism was directed to the previous government’s PESSYP programme as well as the new School Games. The reason the interviewee gave for this was that the majority of young people who compete at junior international level have been developed within the club structure of their sport, not through school structures, and by the time they reach the age for the School Games level 4 competition (national level competition), they have advanced beyond this standard. The School Games programme (and its predecessor) was described by interviewee T as contributing to a good competition route for young people in sport, which has the potential to retain them within sport, rather than advance them along the performance pathway.

The Coalition government’s focus on competitive sport could be described using Hall’s (1986) typology of change as a third order change as it is a change to the policy objectives. The government was very explicit about the importance of competitive sport and “building a lasting legacy of competitive sport in schools” was one of the headline objectives presented in Creating a Sporting Habit for Life (DCMS, 2012a: 3). The removal of the SSPs and the introduction of the School Games could be described as second order changes (Hall, 1986) as they are changes to the nature of the policy instruments for school sport.

As should be clear from this discussion, not only was there instability in the provision of competition opportunities within schools but there was also confusion about the primary purpose of school sport competition and, consequently, its role within TID. The demise of the previous government’s SSP infrastructure appears to be driven primarily by the removal of resources by the new government and its policies for deregulation but it could also suggest that there is not the same institutional support
for school sport that could have meant that the previous programmes would have survived. The focus on competitive sport, with ‘traditional’ sports (namely football, cricket, rugby union, rugby league and tennis – DCMS, 2012a) highlighted by the Coalition government as priorities, appears to have been ideologically motivated with little explicit rationale to support these policy decisions. While there has indeed been substantial turbulence, in the landscape of school sport, including second- and third-order changes, the impact on the elite sport landscape has been minimal.

6.2.2 The education context: Further and Higher Education

There is a long-standing connection between further education (FE) and higher education (HE) and sporting excellence in the UK. For example, the annual Oxford University versus Cambridge University boat race on the River Thames is one of the most significant rowing events of the year and Roger Bannister ran the first sub-4 minute mile at the Oxford University track in 1954. There has been an association governing sport development in universities and inter-institution competition in various guises since 1918, which is now known as British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS)\(^{19}\). The FE and HE settings provide a range of opportunities for elite sport, as highlighted in the previous chapter, including sites for providing facilities, coaching and sport science support as well as space to house administrative headquarters for NGBs.

With specific reference to youth talent, FE and HE institutions may offer opportunities for young people to continue to develop their talent, either through college or university clubs or through NGB programmes located on campuses. As well as nurturing those already identified as talented, interviewee N, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, highlighted that there might be opportunities for young people to try sports that require specific facilities often not available in schools (for example rowing) or late-maturation sports where participants tend to be older (for example triathlon). Furthermore, there may be opportunities for people already involved in one sport to transfer to another sport: interviewee A, a senior representative from Olympic NGB A, stated that in that specific sport, a university-age person with certain levels of fitness and physical attributes could be identified, trained intensively and become an international level competitor in the space of a few years.

\(^{19}\) [http://www.bucs.org.uk/page.asp?section=9&sectionTitle=BUCS+Facts+%26+Information accessed 23/06/2014]
The government’s Talented Athletes Scholarship Scheme (TASS) operates in partnership with NGBs and FE and HE institutions to support young talented people across a wide range of sports. The aim of TASS is “to help its athletes to balance academic life with training and competition as a performance athlete”\(^\text{20}\). TASS began in 2004 and there were 200 TASS-supported athletes in the British team at London 2012, 44 of whom won medals. UK Sport previously funded TASS and UK Sport’s primary objective of winning medals at the Olympic and Paralympic Games influenced the TASS programme and raised standards in terms of the athletes that the programme supports. However, from October 2014 the programme will be funded through Sport England, a change that was made in order to “align it [TASS] with the funding already investing into talent development, and reflect Sport England’s ambition to ensure the England talent system is open and accessible to everyone” (Sport England, 2014). Despite changes to policy at the school level, such as the decline of the Gifted and Talented programme, TASS continues to fill the places available on the programme each year because it works with NGBs rather than schools and nominated candidates have developed through club structures. In spite of the success achieved by TASS, interviewee L, a representative of government, questioned whether TASS is able to identify and support the most talented young people who will actually achieve international success.

While there is some success in the sport and higher education sectors working together to develop talented young people, some interviewees stated that more could be done (Interview K, 30/10/2012; Interview P, 08/03/2013; Interview R, 02/05/2013). Interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB, perceived the issue to be related to finance because universities cannot give sports resources in-kind or allow exclusive use of facilities by sports due to their obligations to the wider student population.

Unlike schools, HEIs have become an increasingly significant part of the elite sport landscape, although much of their role is complementing the developmental role of NGBs. However, given growing emphasis on dual career athletes, both in the UK and internationally (Aquilina and Henry, 2010) the significance of HEIs as part of the architecture of youth TID policy implementation is likely to increase.

6.2.3 The England Talent Pathway and TID in the community setting

In the 1990s, Training of Young Athletes (TOYA) was a landmark set of publications commissioned by the then GB Sports Council in order to understand how young people were trained in order to improve practices and seek a systematic approach to identifying and developing talent in the UK. The study questioned the reliability of the then current methods for the testing of young people to identify talent and the need to fully understand physical, psychological and social factors that can affect the development of talent. Further points highlighted were the financial requirements for developing a young person’s sporting talent, the need to relieve some of that burden from the young person’s family and the need for NGBs to be able to provide guidance on standards and articulate and support success in their sport (Rowley and Baxter-Jones, 1993a, 1993b).

An issue with policies and programmes for TID in the past has been their transient nature and the lack of clarity of roles of different organisations. Interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic NGB, highlighted that past programmes had been supported for only a short period so an opportunity was lost to highlight the success of past programmes when individuals who were discovered through them became Olympic medallists years later.

The most recent change in developing young talent in England has been the explicit priority given to talent pathway development by Sport England. Talent was mentioned in the Sport England document The Framework for Sport in England: “Our task is to help people with talent to excel at the highest level.” (Sport England, 2004: 6). It was stated that appropriate development of the sports infrastructure in England would retain people in sport, including those with talent, and the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme was highlighted as an important structure within the elite sport framework in England. However, there were no specific outcome measures for this work of pathway development and the document was dominated by the core business of Sport England of developing participation in community sport. It was four years later in the Sport England strategy 2008-2011 that the development of talent pathways was identified as a key outcome and the organisation expressed a commitment to build a dedicated team of staff to support this objective. Interviewee M, a senior official from a governmental national sports organisation, stated that this change was driven by government directive and in accordance with the aims and scope of Creating a Sporting Habit for Life (DCMS, 2012a), the Sport England
strategy and funding for the 2012-2017 period makes specific reference to the development of sport for young people aged 14-25 years old (Sport England, 2012). The central priorities of Creating a Sporting Habit for Life of promoting competitive sport for young people and supporting elite sport objectives illustrate the continuing commitment to the policy of systematic development of talent as the policy response to the problem of (or risk of) poor Olympic performance.

Through the England Talent Pathway, Sport England is seeking to implement a system for talent development whereby the NGBs are responsible for indicating the connections and routes from grassroots participation to the World Class level of their sport and identifying the resources in place or required for various levels to function successfully. Sport England has set out four ‘Fundamental elements’, eight ‘Essential elements’ and six ‘Desirable elements’ to guide the NGBs in developing and articulating their pathway. The ‘Fundamental elements’ include the development of a clear talent pathway from grassroots to World Class programmes and the defining of leadership and accountability responsibilities. The ‘Essential elements’ include the deployment and training of coaching staff and clear competition opportunities. The ‘Desirable elements’ include having a communication system for disseminating information to stakeholders including parents and ensuring that there is access to the pathway across varied demographics and geographical locations. The full lists of elements to constitute an effective pathway are shown in Table 6.4.
### Table 6.4 - Key elements of an effective England Talent Pathway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fundamental elements</th>
<th>Essential elements</th>
<th>Desirable elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England talent development pathway</td>
<td>Athlete profiles and talent development curriculum</td>
<td>Communication system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathway populations and connectivity</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Training environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>GB alignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and accountability</td>
<td>Pathway links</td>
<td>Athlete responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathway access at all levels</td>
<td>Continuous improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selection processes</td>
<td>Past performer autobiographies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transition programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talent recognition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sport England (no date)

The inclusion of the importance of evidence and the need to effectively articulate how the system is managed are clearly in line with processes embedded in Sport England and UK Sport in their capacities as non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and are consistent with the modernisation agenda was implemented during the last Labour government. A key feature of the England Talent Pathway is that there are not fixed entry and exit points on the pathway so people identified as talented at an older age can still progress within the pathway, which addresses a key concern raised in the TOYA study that talent that emerges later is often “locked-out” of the talent development system (Rowley and Baxter-Jones, 1993a: 17).

There is flexibility in the system so that sports can use their own terminology, which is often long-standing and embedded in the sport’s structure and culture. The examples in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 indicate the differing language used by two sports, basketball and taekwondo, but indicate a fundamentally similar structure as prescribed by Sport England.
Figure 6.1 - England Talent Pathway for Basketball

Source: England Basketball

Figure 6.2 - England Talent Pathway for Taekwondo

Source: British Taekwondo

21 http://www.englandbasketball.co.uk/uploads/Performance/Performance%20Pathway%2020131008.pdf accessed 23/06/2014

Interviewee M, a senior official from a government-funded national sports organisation, outlined a key difference between the England Talent Pathway and the World Class Performance programme: the aim of the England Talent Pathway is to include as many talented people as possible and support them to realise their talent to whatever level they can achieve, whereas the World Class Performance programme is very exclusive and the *No Compromise* approach means that only those perceived to be able to achieve success on the international stage will be supported. Interviewees from UK Sport and Sport England agreed that the England Talent Pathway is underpinning the work of UK Sport and the World Class Performance Programme (Interviewee M, 07/01/2013; Interviewee P, 06/03/2013) however, interviewee M added that the programme does not exist solely to feed the higher levels of sports performance but is designed to retain people in sport.

Interviewees representing NGBs identified two primary reasons for endorsing Sport England’s support for a clear system for identifying and developing talent. Firstly the pathway creates a link between the development of the sport at community level and the elite level so these two areas are not seen as being so disconnected (interview A, 16/02/2012; interview G, 16/05/2012). Secondly, specific resourcing of talent pathways is needed in order to continually supply the very top of sport performance with new players and athletes to ensure that international success is sustainable (interview C, 19/03/2012). Interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic NGB, described the increased focus on the development of talent pathways as “the biggest direct change in British sport” in recent years (Interview D, 02/04/2012). However, interviewee A, a senior official from Olympic NGB A, highlighted an issue with the planning process as this was a new programme for the 2008-2011 funding cycle and the sport “did not make the correct assumptions around how much money they would need to run the England talent pathway” (Interview A, 16/02/2012).

A crucial consideration for the England Talent Pathway is delivery. Interviewee M, a senior official from a government-funded national sports organisation, described clubs as “the bedrock of community sport” and the place in which most initial talent identification is carried out (Interview M, 07/01/2013). Conversely, the School Games progression model and qualification for the ‘Level 4’ event is solely through schools, whereas qualification for the previous UK School Games model had been via club structures. Interviewee M highlighted that clubs and schools need to complement each other when it comes to developing talented young people but noted that it is not
within a school’s remit to develop sport-specific talent (interview, 29/01/2013). So at present clubs are responsible for youth TID while schools are responsible for encouraging participation in competitive sport and the School Games.

In addition to supporting school-based talent work, the YST manages a talent programme called the National Talent Orientation Camp (NTOC) alongside NGBs and the British Paralympic Association (BPA). The aim of the camp is “to prepare talented young sports people (aged 13-18) for life as a high-performance athlete” (Youth Sport Trust23). This programme is for a selected group of sports and it is not considered to be part of the England Talent Pathway, but it is not viewed as being contrary to it. DCMS highlighted the successful contribution of the NTOC in the document Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games (DCMS, 2008b) but the government does not fund the NTOC programme.

An additional consideration for identifying and developing youth talent is the specific context of disability sport and Paralympic sport. Interviewee S, a senior official from national sports organisation S, noted that the situation is more complicated for Paralympic sport because it operates in a much smaller population (i.e.: those with an impairment) and often there is less awareness of sports that are available for people to participate, compete and potentially excel within. Furthermore, not all impairments are congenital – some are acquired later in life as a result of injury or illness and people may become involved in sport as a result of acquiring the impairment – so not all people with the potential to be Paralympians are currently involved in sport. It may also be true that those people identified as talented may not be ‘young’ in the sense of being in school or further or higher education if their impairment has been acquired or their sport talent discovered later in life. Interviewee S also noted that the Paralympic movement is younger than the Olympic movement, both domestically and internationally, and therefore it is to be expected that innovations and development of elite sport policy would be less advanced within Paralympic sport.

6.3 Funding

Public financial support for TID continued following the change of government in 2010. The inclusion of talent as a priority in the Sport England plan for the period

---

2008-2011 meant that this area of development received significant resourcing. In the funding period 2009-2013, approximately 25% of Sport England’s funding to NGBs was channelled into programmes to identify and develop talent. This percentage was maintained for the next funding cycle 2013-2017. Interviewee M, a senior official from a government-funded national sports organisation, stated that a key change in the spending of this money in the 2013-2017 period compared with the previous period is greater control of the funding in terms of outcome-based planning and regular reporting and external scrutiny of programmes by Sport England. This approach has been influenced by the modernisation of the government’s sports agencies and the NGBs. The publication of separate funding figures by Sport England for the first time indicates a clear commitment to talent as a specific element of the NGBs’ work.

For the period 2013-2017, Sport England allocated £433.8million to NGBs in order to fund the work outlined in their whole sport plans, which included a £40million fund for ‘Reward and incentive’ to be allocated to NGBs that were performing well during the funding period. A total of £83.9million was allocated to talent programmes. Five sports (cycling, football24, athletics, rugby league and swimming) were allocated in excess of £4million over the four-year funding period. Furthermore, netball, rugby union and squash and racketball, which are not funded by UK Sport, were allocated significant funds (£8.5million, £4.8million and £5million respectively) to support their talent development and elite development programmes (women only for rugby union). The reason for funding elite programmes in these sports was that they are important at the home country level because that are included in the Commonwealth Games.

In addition to funding NGBs, Sport England allocated £10million of Exchequer funding to County Sport Partnerships in order to enable delivery of programmes at the local level, which includes supporting TID programmes.

In addition to public funding and programmes, there are private sector programmes that seek to support talented young athletes. For example, the supermarket chain Asda runs a programme whereby each of their supermarkets support a local athlete25. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, commented that such programmes are good as long as the athlete gains a performance benefit from the funding or support that they receive but that some programmes are mainly seeking to brand an athlete with the company’s name and gain recognition when or if that

24 Sport England only funds girls’ and women’s football
25 http://your.asda.com/athletes/ accessed 13/05/2013
athlete achieves success. Interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O5), stated that the sport had used funding drawn from its commercial partner to fund programmes for young talented athletes in order to prevent them from being absorbed too early into more prescribed funding and support structures at the lower levels of the World Class Performance Programme (Interview K, 30/10/2012). The use of commercial funds to support young talented athletes does not necessarily indicate a shift in overall funding landscape as these funds are relatively small compared with public funding and are usually paid to individuals rather than to the NGB. Consequently, access to commercial funding sources does not result in any significant alteration in the pattern of resource dependence.

There is also charity funding through organisations such as SportsAid (formerly known as The Sports Aid Foundation), which gives cash grants to young athletes. From its establishment in 1976 to 1997, SportsAid funded athletes at all levels but after the introduction of National Lottery funding for elite sport in 1997 the charity changed its focus to concentrate on young talented people who are not yet eligible for National Lottery support26. As the Youth Sport Trust is also a charity, its programmes to support young talented athletes also rely on third-sector funding. Philanthropic support, for example the generosity of individuals such as Eddie Kulukundis (Longmore, 1999) and Barrie Wells (White, 2012) to support athletes with personal donations is also an important part of the funding context. The ongoing willingness of charitable giving in this part of the elite sport landscape indicates that the value of supporting young talented people is embedded in the development system. The willingness by government for the third-sector to take on some of the financial responsibility for supporting young athletes could be described through the lens of rational choice institutionalism as the government is merely responding to the institution to ensure maximum gain from a policy perspective: if the government moved to prevent the involvement of charities then the funding and organisational gap that would be created would become the responsibility of the government.

6.4 Political salience

Elite sport became a political priority when John Major was Prime Minister (Bloyce and Smith, 2010). He was particularly, though not exclusively, concerned about the health of the nation’s elite teams in traditional team sports such as cricket and

football and laid the foundations for addressing the issue. Major also had a keen interest in school sport but with a focus on developing "a lifetime’s enjoyment of sport" (DNH, 1995: 3), rather than focusing on developing talent. The dual focus of elite and school/youth sport was continued by the Labour government from 1997 onwards and again received particular attention from the Prime Minister, Tony Blair (DCMS, 2000; 2002). At this time the Labour government refined the focus on young people to include talent. The political salience of elite sport and youth sport have continued but the narrative around developing sport for young people has been subject to subtle changes that at times have included policies around creating systematic identification and development of young talented people. The political salience of developing young talent in sport can be viewed in two contexts: within education and outside of education.

In terms of the education context, the DfES/DCMS publication *Learning Through PE and Sport* included the claim that PE and school sport can improve “success in international competition by ensuring talented young sports people have a clear pathway to elite sport and competition whatever their circumstances” (DfES/DCMS, 2003: 1). However, in 2010, in the context of school and youth sport, a key policy decision made by the Coalition government was to deprioritise the PESSYP programme, meaning that schools would no longer be obligated to spend money on the strands of work contained within PESSYP, including support for Gifted and Talented pupils. Melville (2012: 9) described the key change in policy for the School Games as being “to give greater emphasis to inter-school competition, rather than talent-development”.

Currently, policy for physical education and sport in schools is informed by conflicting narratives of creating opportunities for more people to take part and concern over the disproportionately high number of Team GB members and medallists who were educated in the private sector (Hayden and McConnell, 2013). The government has stated that they wish to see more competitive sport in schools but, as noted above, this is not informed by a talent narrative, but instead is seen as the best route for involving more young people in sport. However, concerns about state versus private education were raised during the London 2012 Olympic Games because 37% of the medallists on the British team were educated privately compared with 7% of the general population (Gibson, 2012; Paton, 2012). It was highlighted by several public figures, including Lord Moynihan who was then the Chair of the BOA, that this was not acceptable and that better understanding was needed as to why state schools...
were failing to produce elite sportspeople compared with private schools. However, there has not been a direct link made between this issue and changes to PE and school sport.

For sport outside of schools, the policy document *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* (DCMS, 2012a) provided a statement of support by the government for developing talent in the age group targeted by the strategy, 14-25 years. It was stated that NGBs’ Whole Sport Plans should include the outcome “High quality talent development to create better talent pool and help those with real potential to make the grade” (DCMS, 2012a: 10). *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* was published in January 2012 but reviews of Whole Sport Plans were not completed until end of 2012 and funding for these plans was available from April 2013 so there was a period of over a year between government priorities being set out and NGBs being able to respond fully. The Labour government’s final policy paper for sport, *Playing to Win* (DCMS, 2008a) treated talent and excellence in sport as being of paramount importance: the opening sentence of the document’s introduction was “When you play sport, you play to win” and expanding the talent pool was stated as a central aim within the document (DCMS, 2008a: 2). However, the importance given to elite sport success needs to be seen in the context of UK preparations for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012.

The Labour government’s legacy plan for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, *Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games* (DCMS, 2008b: 3), explicitly linked the hosting of the London 2012 Games to the opportunity to develop talent and stated that “The Games will help to unlock talent.” However, this was not an assertion repeated by the Coalition government in their document *Plans for the Legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*, published by DCMS in December 2010, and talent did not feature in the 10-point legacy plan announcement made following the conclusion of the Games in September 2012 (Robertson, 2012).

The Sport England Strategy 2008-2011 stated “the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport asked Sport England to review its strategy for community sport in England” (Sport England, 2008: 1), thus showing the active interest of government in the development of an effective strategy and this was attributed to the UK’s position as host for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. In addition, interviewee M, a senior official from a government-funded national sports organisation, stated that
government directives and policy drove the prioritisation of talent. However, the most recent Sport England strategy for the period 2012-2017 did not indicate the same government interest and instead used the word ‘we’, which may indicate that the drive for a new strategy came from within the organisation itself (Sport England, 2012).

Youth sport policy, and therein youth elite sport, can be described as inconsistent due to it being influenced by different policy sub-sectors and organisations within the landscape and therefore being subject to changing policy narratives. There was high political salience of youth sport during the period studied due in large part to the narrative of legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the idea that British success at the Games would influence young people’s participation in sport. These ideas have permeated the sport policy sub-sector despite having little evidence to support them, something that Coalter (2007: 9) might described as being part of the “mythopoeic” nature of sport, meaning that beliefs are informed by myths rather than reality.

6.5 Conclusion

Since the 1990s youth TID has become more prominent as a feature of the elite sport policy landscape. While policy has been changeable, roles and responsibilities have become better defined. However, it could be argued that there continues to be some ambiguity about exactly where the responsibilities of Sport England and UK Sport begin and end but there is less overlap now than there has been in the past and a greater sense that the two organisations’ programmes are complementing each other. However, an issue remains that there may not be a consensus about what the term ‘talent’ means and the two organisations are driven by very different remits prescribed by DCMS so there is uncertainty in the policy definition. The importance of youth talent has become embedded within the values and priorities of key organisations, especially NGBs, Sport England and UK Sport, even if the exact approach to identifying and developing talented young people is not uniform.

Under the previous Labour government there had been a clear responsibility for talent in schools, with support from the Youth Sport Trust and as part of the School Sport Partnerships infrastructure. The removal of funding for School Sport Partnerships and the PESSYP programme by the Coalition government can be
identified as a significant second-order change in the landscape and is an example of youth sport policy being affected by education policy. Although this change has led to the demise of the Gifted and Talented programme in schools, TID work has not ceased because additional responsibility has been delegated to Sport England instead. The Coalition government has not stopped supporting the identification and development of talented young people but it has moved responsibility for young people’s sport from a position where it was split between two departments, DCMS and the Department of Education, to being situated solely with DCMS, with Sport England taking a leading role for policy delivery.

Using Hall’s (1986) typology of change it could be argued that a third order change has taken place because the government has narrowed the scope of its sport policy to young people aged 14 to 25 years through the publication *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* (DCMS, 2012a) and the subsequent changes to objectives attached to the funding that is distributed to NGBs by Sport England. However, spending for other areas of sport, especially elite sport but also facilities development and coaching, continues so this change is not necessarily as radical as a third order change. The government might argue that the introduction of the School Games programme represents a second order change – the introduction of a new policy instrument – but the existence of the previous government’s UK School Games programme may limit the evidence for this being described as a new instrument, despite the shifting policy objectives of promotion of competitive sport rather than TID. Consequently, the School Games are better described as a first order change as it is a change to the intensity of the policy: the government has narrowed its priorities for youth sport and adapted the competition structures in school to develop the School Games programme.

Before the establishment of the Coalition government and the subsequent changes to sport within schools, it could have been argued that a path dependency was being established. To reflect upon Sydow et al’s (2005) description of the establishment of path dependency in three phases, pre-formation, path formation and path dependence, the Labour government’s policy of developing sport for young people, and within the this the identification and development of talent, could be described as being in the path formation phase. In this phase, there is an emerging path brought about by self-reinforcing processes due to the success of the policy for youth TID but the path is reversible and indeed the path was reversed by the policies of the new government and Secretary of State, Michael Gove. However, it could be argued that
there are more than one policy paths involved in the sector, including sport, education, youth welfare and health, which raises the question of which path the policy can be locked in to. This highlights a more general issue with the framework for path dependency because it assumes that each policy sector and potential policy path is self-contained.

In terms of political support for this policy area, this was explicit and well-resourced under the Labour government. Political support for youth TID has become less explicit since the Coalition government was established, which could be viewed as a decline in the political salience. However, the growth of work in this area and the continuation of resources dedicated to it, for example the significant support for competitive sport in schools and the ring fencing of funding through Sport England for the development of the England Talent Pathway by NGBs, would suggest that it has actually become so ingrained in the operations of key organisations that it does not require explicit statements from government.

Although the current government’s motivations for supporting youth sport can be described as inconsistent: there is a fundamental concern about young people’s involvement in sport and the notion of creating a lifelong habit of participating in sport but the focus on competitive sport within schools is a more narrow approach than has been taken in the past and while identification of talent may occur in the school setting, it is not seen as a priority. The youth-centred policy statement for sport, Creating a Sporting Habit for Life (DCMS, 2012a), presented talent development as one of many elements of sport development. To reflect on the Multiple Streams Framework, the problem stream can be described as unstable because there is a lack of consistency around what problems need to be tackled for young people within sport, for example participation, health or development of talent, plus there is ambiguity in the political stream regarding the relationship of sport to young people as it is prioritised by the DCMS but not by the Department of Education. Therefore the policy stream is also unclear and inconsistent: policy solutions may be difficult to articulate and may not be successful while the definition of the issue and the political mood relating to potential issues remains inconsistent within government.

The hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was an exogenous factor that impacted upon the development of policy in this area, specifically due to the decision to move funding for talent within the WCPP from Sport England to UK Sport. This change strengthened UK Sport’s position as the dominant organisation
within the elite sport policy landscape and meant that it assumed full control of resourcing of the performance pathway for Olympic and Paralympic sports. UK Sport’s plans for working towards a target of fourth place in the medal table for Team GB at the Olympic Games in 2012 were founded on robust evidence and with a clear plan for developing talent. It is important to consider that UK Sport benefitted from having an audience that was receptive to its evidence and arguments.

In terms of programmes, there is significant and ring-fenced funding being channelled into the development of the England Talent Pathway system, supported by human resource within Sport England. The England Talent Pathway is arguably still developing and it may not be possible to make a full assessment of the programme’s success and whether it represents a further step on the ‘path’ of promoting TID until the end of the current funding cycle. Furthermore, there is a clear structure for developing competitive sport in schools through the School Games, although as noted above the government does not underpin this programme with an explicit talent narrative. The higher and further education sectors provide a supportive environment for developing talent but some interviewees stated that more could be done in this sector to make the overall system more effective.

Ideology is an important element to consider in the development of policy for young people. In youth sport talent policy, there are two key considerations relating to ideology: firstly the underlying philosophy of what activities are best for young people and secondly the structural preferences for policy delivery of the party in government. Relating to the first issue, the School Games is not informed by a talent narrative but rather it is seen as the best way to get young people engaged in sport and there is a long history of competitive sport being perceived positively by the Conservative Party. The policy statement for sport published during John Major’s Conservative government, Sport: Raising the Game (DNH, 1995) focused on the importance of traditional competitive team sports in schools. The current Prime Minister, David Cameron, was vocal about the need for young people to be engaged in competitive sport in schools (Press Association, 2012). The second issue relating to ideology around structures brought about the dismantling of the School Sport Partnerships and the PESSYP programme that those structures, along with the Youth Sport Trust, delivered. The programme was seen as too centrally controlled and too reliant on meeting government-mandated targets and these issues formed a large part of the Coalition government’s rationale for abolishing the structures. The structure for identification and development of talented young people is now the responsibility of
DCMS and is implemented through Sport England, UK Sport and TASS and their partners. The significance of ideology in the decision-making around youth talent means that it is difficult to assess whether the changes made by the current government will continue or be adapted by this government or indeed an alternative administration following the next general election.

The influence of ideology in this part of the policy landscape is stronger than the influence of evidence or lobbying. The historical institution of the physical education national curriculum and the existence of competitive and extra-curricular sport within the sector may have influenced the government's policy to a certain extent but the government was able to change the structures and emphasis of policy in this area, thus resisting the establishment of a path dependency. As noted above, lobbying by supporters of the previous Labour government's programmes and structures resisted change for a short time but the Coalition government proceeded with its preferred approach eventually. TID is a priority for organisations within the landscape, specifically for Sport England, UK Sport, the YST and TASS, but there little explicit, written government support for TID: support is more rhetorical and evident through financial support for specific programmes.
Chapter 7 – Nurturing and Transferring Talent

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses upon the development of talented athletes and the emerging strategy of talent transfer. The term ‘development’ does not have a precise definition in this context but it is usually accepted to mean the period between an athlete being identified as being talented and reaching the top of their sport or the limit of their abilities. Talent transfer is a newer concept that relates to athletes transferring between sports based on physical parameters in order to maximise their potential. The case study will again be structured around three central aspects that make up the policy landscape: organisations and their programmes and partnerships; funding; and political salience.

A combination of the intensification of international competition and the economic and political pressures to produce successful British athletes, especially for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, led to increased concern with the development of talent in the UK. The intensification of international competition, combined with the short public sector funding cycles for UK Sport in particular and the relatively short-term concerns of politicians driven by election cycles has resulted in pressure on public-funded bodies and NGBs to identify and develop talent in a more systematic and arguably rapid way. The previous chapter focused upon policies to support the identification of talent both in the education sector and within clubs and other structures, this chapter examines the structures in place to nurture, and sometimes transfer, talented people to ensure they reach the top level of their sport and produce results at major championships.

Talent development is perhaps the least easily defined part of the elite sport structure in the UK: it may cover a broad time-period for a sportsperson and could differ dramatically between sports depending on whether the sport is an early- or late-development sport and what structures are in place for domestic and international competition at sub-senior level. Bloom (1985) described three phases of development in becoming an elite athlete: firstly the initiation phase, where the person is getting to know their sport; secondly the development phase, which is the time when athletes dedicate more and more time to their sport through training and become specialists in their sport; and finally the perfection phase when athletes reach their peak. Bloom’s model was used by De Bosscher et al (2008) as part of the
The SPLISS study found that talent identification and development in sport in the UK was quite poor, with none of the countries in the sample scoring above “moderate level of development” in this category. The study found that countries that scored better than the UK had developed “nationally coordinated systems and financial support for talented athletes during the secondary phase of their education” (De Bosscher et al, 2008: 92). Martindale, Collins and Daubney (2005) highlighted that systematic programmes relating to talent identification have focused on young people and that the next stage of an athlete’s development, which they termed ‘nurturing and development’, is often less well supported within the elite sport system. They went on to note that this is not a straightforward situation because different people may require different interventions and environments to assist their development and the authors speculated that an issue in this area is a lack of specific coaching expertise for this phase of development. Interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB, highlighted the issue of there being a large gap between junior and senior level competitions and the time it can take an athlete to develop from junior standard to senior in some sports can be off-putting for junior athletes. The same interviewee cited a former world junior champion in the sport who retired after competing at junior level because she had priorities within her education that she felt would not be compatible with the amount of time and intensity of training that would be needed to progress to compete at a senior international standard.

There are a range of different hierarchies of development in sports, including specific age brackets and terms such as ‘junior’ or ‘youth’ meaning different things for different sports. These structures are usually informed by the international competitive environment and set by international federations. The sport of athletics groups athletes into youth (under-17s), junior (under-19s) and under-23s. Within cricket, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) have national squads for under-17s and under-19s whereas the Football Association (FA) have squads for under-16s, under-17s, under-18s, under-19s, under-20s and under-21s in the men’s game and under-15s, under-17s, under-19s, under-20s and under-23s in the women’s game. In addition, athletes across a number of sports in this stage of their development might compete in competitions such as World University Games, Youth Olympic Games and Youth Commonwealth Games.

Although most development models focus on age, there can be a huge variation between peak ages across different sports and between different events within sports. Schultz and Curnow (1988) examined longitudinal data of peak ages in five
sports (track and field, swimming, tennis, baseball and golf) in the USA based on rankings, points, wins, records and results at Olympic Games. The study found that swimmers peak at the youngest age and golfers at the oldest. Within track and field athletics, the events were split in to four groups: short, medium and long distance running and jumping; and the study found that long-distance runners were older than other runners and jumpers when they reached their peak (see Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 – Peak ages of competitors in five sports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Running - short distance</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Running - short distance</td>
<td>Jumping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Jumping</td>
<td>Running - medium distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Running - medium distance</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Running - long distance</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>Running - long distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>Golf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There are anomalies within peak ages: for example Martina Hingis won her first tennis grand slam title at the age of 16 and retired, or took her first hiatus, from the sport at the age of 22. Therefore development structures that are built around young people may not be relevant to all sports because not all athletes in the ‘development’ phase fit within the age categories for competitions: in some cases the athlete peaks much later or may have already peaked before they are eligible for age-group competitions. As noted above, such variations make this area of study particularly difficult to define and to generate general statements or set policies for this stage of elite sport.

From a policy perspective, in the 1980s, the GB Sports Council used the pyramid model of sport participation development, which showed sport participation as a
continuum whereby there was an implied progression upwards from foundation and participation levels to performance and excellence (see Figure 7.1). This model was based upon an assumption that talented people would continue to develop within sport and move up the pyramid and would not necessarily require structured intervention from NGBs or any other organisations and that populations would reduce at each level. However, the model’s position was weakened as it was seen as too simple, as Bergsgard et al (2007: 210) observed: “shifts in sport policy from 1990 onwards emphasised increasing specialisation and segmentation of interests.” Despite the pyramid model being largely abandoned as an appropriate diagrammatic representation of development in sport, a four-level system is still used by SportscoachUK as a framework for developing coaching. The central, though not universally-adopted, model for coach development in the UK is based around four levels of coaching expertise from novice to master and operating across four different types of sport participant populations: children, participation, performance development and high performance (The National Coaching Foundation, 2012: 28).

Figure 7.1 – The pyramid model of sport development

Another model used to conceptualise the development process is the Long Term Athlete Development model (LTAD). The model was used in the UK in order to attempt to make the development of talented athletes more systematic and coordinated. It has been endorsed by organisations such as sportscoachUK, which uses the model to guide coaching practice. The LTAD, shown in Figure 7.2, describes levels of development according to age and gender and recommends levels of engagement with training in terms of the type and intensity of the training. Some versions of the model also indicate exit points from competitive sport and
training into a lifelong plan of participation in sport and physical activity. However, while some NGBs have embraced the model to inform their programmes, the model has its critics. For example, Collins and Bailey (2013) were critical of the LTAD and its adoption within sport in the UK because of the lack of substantiated evaluation of its impact and effectiveness.

Figure 7.2 – The Long Term Athlete Development model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Active Start</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Build overall movement skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>FUNdamental Training to Train</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learn all fundamental sports skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Training to Train</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Build the engine and consolidate sport-specific skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Training to Compete</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fine tune the engine, skills and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Training to Win</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Maximise performance, skills and engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Retaining</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Adjustment/retain players/athletes for coaching/administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: sportscoachUK, 2011:1

UK Sport has also developed its own model focused on the development of elite athletes and linked to its funding strategy. There are three levels within the UK Sport model known as talent, development and podium and athletes received varying levels of support depending on which level they are at in their development and when they are expected to be a potential medal-winner at the Olympic Games. These levels constitute the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP). With reference to Olympic and Paralympic sport, the WCPP offers specific funding and support for athletes who are still developing and are defined as being at the ‘Development’ stage of the programme. These are athletes that are seen as having the potential to win medals at the Olympic or Paralympic Games in the future, not necessarily the forthcoming Games, so in advance of London 2012 this group of athletes were identified as potential medal winners for 2016.

In addition to supporting athletes as part of the WCPP, in 2006 UK Sport began doing more targeted work on the identification of talent and the transfer of talent.
When the government increased UK Sport’s funding and transferred responsibility for talent and the management of the WCPP and the English Institute of Sport from Sport England to UK Sport in 2006, UK Sport began programmes “to accelerate the development of our most promising coaches and talent identification experts, as well as sports science and medicine practitioners.” (UK Sport, 2012: 11). The first major talent recruitment campaign began in 2007. The talent programmes have sought to recruit and fast track new talent and also transfer talented people from one sport or discipline to another.

The concept of talent transfer has challenged the popular philosophy of it taking 10,000 hours to develop an elite athlete. This philosophy, attributed to the work of K. A. Ericsson, theorises that in order to become an expert, a person must engage in 10,000 hours of deliberate practice in that field, particularly when the person is young, and over a period of up to 10 years, or sometimes longer (Ericsson, Prietula and Cokely, 2007). Toni Michiello, the coach of Olympic gold medallist in the heptathlon, Jessica Ennis, is often cited as a subscriber to this approach and Ennis’s career is seen as evidence of the validity of this philosophy (Gillon, 2012). However, talent transfer programmes directly challenge this assumption in relation to some sports and have led to this period of becoming an expert and a champion performer being condensed significantly. For example, one of Team GB’s gold medallists in rowing, Helen Glover, was channelled into rowing as part of a talent transfer programme and went from being a non-rower to being an Olympic medallist in 5 years (Redgrave, 2012). Significantly for sport policy, the introduction of talent transfer programmes and the shorter time that it can take to develop an athlete has also meant that there has been a quicker return on investment. The introduction of talent transfer can also be seen as a product of the emphasis on the modernisation of British sport initiated by the Labour government as it indicates a more outcome-focused and systematic approach to development. However, opportunities for talent transfer can vary: it could be argued that transferring a tall and fit non-rower into an Olympic medal winning rower in five years is more straightforward that training someone to become a dressage rider or a pole vaulter having not tried those disciplines before and in these cases it would be less likely that the 10,000 hours could be condensed.

Talent transfer programmes have also challenged the assumption that talented people would rise to the top of their sport, as in the pyramid model. De Bosscher et al (2008) found that the UK’s ‘Talent identification and development system’ scored
poorly by the study’s measures and this was attributed to a lack of a systematic approach to talent and the fact that the UK has a large population. The SPLISS study identified that as international sport becomes more competitive, a more systematic approach to talent would be required. The talent transfer approach has been useful in reducing the time it takes for some athletes to become experts in their sports and compete internationally, at least in relation to a significant proportion of Olympic sports, thus contradicting the assertion by Ericsson et al that “increasingly stiff competition now makes it almost impossible to beat the ten-year rule” (2007:5).

7.2 Organisations, programmes and partnerships

7.2.1 Talent development

As noted above, the development phase and process in a sport may be shaped by domestic and international competition and for Olympic and Paralympic sports, the structure of the WCPP is an influencing factor. In the past, this development process may have involved an athlete moving to a different club in order to engage in a higher level of competition in the case of team sports, or changing their coach in order to continue to develop in the case of individual sports such as swimming or athletics. One of the central recommendations of the Cunningham Report about funding for elite sport in the UK was the development of a UK Sports Institute, which should be “an environment and structure to turn talented sports individuals into international performers of world standing” (Cunningham, 2001: 32). These plans were abandoned but the home country sports institutes have all developed and provide science services to sports to nurture their athletes and a number of sports, for example cycling and cricket, have adopted an approach of central training facilities for their top athletes so many athletes are no longer developed through club structures.

‘Pathway’ is a term often used when referring to talent development, meaning the route that an individual takes from being a talented, young athlete to being a senior, top-level performer. Before 2006, the ‘development’ level of the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP), which was described in chapter 5, was the responsibility of Sport England but this responsibility was transferred to UK Sport in 2006. However, since the inception of Sport England’s England Talent Pathway (ETP) programme in 2009, which was discussed in the previous chapter, the talent
pathway is one area where there is overlap between the operations of UK Sport and Sport England. Interviewee L, a senior civil servant, described the talent pathway, along with coaching, as an "obvious" area where the two organisations can work together (Interview L, 06/11/2012). In the House of Lords report on the legacy of London 2012 it was noted that, as a result of the closer working relationship, there are “better and more aligned talent pathways” (House of Lords, 2013: 43). The two organisations working more closely was encouraged by government but it was informed by a desire for both organisations to be more financially efficient rather than being directly about developing talented sportspeople. This is a change in the landscape but it is merely a shift in the relationships between the two organisations and does not fundamentally alter their priorities and core functions, which are more deeply institutionalised.

Interviewees, particularly those representing Sport England and UK Sport, reported a certain amount of cooperation between the two organisations, especially in relation to talent. This could indicate a break with the past and the long-standing tension between elite development and increasing participation. This tension was present when there was one national Sports Council because the organisation had such a wide range of objectives to fulfil. The tension continued when the organisation was split although it was partly resolved when full responsibility for elite sport and the WCPP was transferred to UK Sport in 2006. It is possible that the tension has been resolved but it could be the case that the present situation of plentiful funding and government support has temporarily diminished these issues and they could resurface if the ETP fails to integrate effectively with the WCPP.

The structures and systems that exist within specific sports to support their development level athletes can vary considerably. British Athletics divides its athletes into three categories: podium, podium potential and futures; and funding and services are aligned with the WCPP and are available at the podium and podium potential levels. The levels are divided to reflect “the actual and potential performance levels of the athletes” (British Athletics, 2013: 1) and the selection criteria outlined by the NGB combine achievement of certain standards, including achieving specific times/heights/distances in specific events and performance at the most recent Olympic Games and IAAF World Championships, with the discretion of a selection panel. The 'podium potential' level within the performance matrix is for developing athletes. This level of the programme is further sub-divided into two levels, as detailed in Table 7.2.
### Table 7.2 - Podium Potential levels within the British Athletics Performance Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Athletes who achieved a relevant individual WCPP selection standard a minimum of 2 times within the relevant qualification period AND who the selection panel believe demonstrate realistic potential to finish in the top 8 in an individual event at the 2017 IAAF World Championships and win an individual medal at the 2020 Olympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Athletes who achieved a relevant individual WCPP selection standard a minimum of 2 times within the relevant qualification period AND who the selection panel believe demonstrate realistic potential to win an individual medal at the 2020 Olympic Games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: British Athletics (2013: 3)

Arguably one of the more developed systems is that of British Cycling. British Cycling operates a squad system structured according to the age and level of development of the cyclists. There is the Olympic Talent Team for 13-16 year olds, Olympic Development Programme for 16-18 year olds and the Olympic Academy Programme for under-23s (see Figure 7.3). The Development and Academy programmes have specific sub-programmes depending on the cycling discipline (track, road, BMX and mountain bike) and the programmes are adapted to the athletes’ age, physical development and other aspects such as family circumstances. For example, the Olympic Development Programme is adjusted for athletes still in education while the Olympic Academy Programme is a full-time programme, the Talent Team is regionally based whereas the other programmes are based centrally at the British Cycling headquarters in Manchester and the balance of emphasis between skills and physical conditioning adapts as the athletes move up the programmes. The Podium, Academy and Development programmes run by British Cycling align well with the structure of the WCPP which has three levels: Podium, Development and Talent.
Despite movements towards a more rational structure for developing talented athletes, interviewee W, a senior figure in British sport\(^{28}\), stated that the majority of high performance athletes are “a product of a fundamentally traditional sport development experience” in as much as they had found a sport that they enjoyed, become more proficient, trained more and eventually reached a high level of performance (Interview W, 20/11/2013). However, the same interviewee noted that the journey these athletes had taken could be “pretty haphazard” and while he acknowledged that the high performance system would not exist without participation and competition structures below it, he stated that programmes designed to move an athlete from being talented to being a medal winner are “incredibly foggy and not well-aligned… nobody has cracked it” (Interview W, 20/11/2013).

So at present, both UK Sport and Sport England have systems to support the development of talent through the WCPP and the ETP respectively. However, as noted in the previous chapter, the two organisations’ definitions of ‘talent’ are not necessarily aligned, although interviewees from both organisations were in agreement about the two programmes being complementary. As both organisations’ programmes are well resourced there is little opposition to having these two programmes working under towards the objective of developing talent. Many sports have designed their own elite talent pathways tied in to the structure of the WCPP. A potential issue with the WCPP is the crudeness of the measure of success: the medal tally at the Olympic Games (although there are targets for sports in the intervening years, the Olympic Games is the primary focus). Athletes that are at the ‘development’ level of WCPP are expected to be medallists up to eight years in the

\(^{27}\) http://www.britishcycling.org.uk/gbcyclingteam/article/Gbrst_Great-Britain-Cycling-Team-Olympic-Programmes accessed 02/04/2014

\(^{28}\) Interviewee W has held many positions within sport in the UK including being an elite athlete, a coach and a senior official at a NGB and a government agency over many years and therefore is not referred to in this research as representing a specific organisation.
future, which is something that can be very difficult to predict. A further complicating factor in developing effective and efficient talent development systems in the UK is the constitutional structure of the country in terms of the home countries having devolved powers for certain elements of public policy, including sport.

The challenge of devolution

Sport policy is a devolved responsibility, meaning that the home countries are responsible for setting policy for sport, including elite sport. Devolution presents a specific challenge to the process of developing a talented athlete. As noted in chapter 5, from an organisational perspective, this means that Olympic NGBs are divided into home country organisations and UK-level organisations, which can impact upon the development of talented athletes. Many of these organisational divisions came about as part of the modernisation agenda under the Labour government, as discussed in chapter 5, during which time UK Sport reviewed governance structures of the NGBs that it funded. As a result of the review, many sports established new NGBs to govern the elite levels of their sport for the UK and to receive government funding for this work via UK Sport. When new UK-level organisations were created, the government, through UK Sport, reassumed a greater level of control of the elite sport system. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, stated that one of the reasons behind the decision to allocate full control of the WCPP to UK Sport was that the provision for the lower levels of WCPP at the home country level was not consistent and by moving the whole programme to UK Sport there could be a nationwide overview and “whether you’re in John O’ Groats, Lands End, Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh or London, you get the same deal” (Interview R, 02/05/2013). This centralisation of programming and tighter control over the activities of the NGBs is consistent with elements of the Labour government’s modernisation agenda but is contradictory to the general rhetoric of deregulation present in the current Coalition government.

Not surprisingly, the concentration of responsibility for the WCPP has intensified the tension between the home countries’ interests and UK-wide interests, which has required careful management (Houlihan and Green, 2009). The tension has been an issue when the home country NGB of a sport considers that they have not had

29 Interviewee R has held many positions within sport in the UK including being an elite athlete and a senior official for a number of different government and non-government sports organisations over many years and therefore is not referred to in this research as representing a specific organisation.
sufficient resource and they see that their GB counterpart is well supported. A typical comment was made by interviewee A, senior official from an Olympic NGB, who stated “what has happened is this kind of operational jealousy where quite a few people in England have spent their time being critical of the GB programme” (Interview A, 16/02/2012). This has a knock-on effect for developing athletes moving between programmes as the gap between the home country and the UK performance programmes is too wide and cannot be bridged by most athletes. Badminton provides a valuable illustration of this problem.

The player pathway for badminton is shown in Figure 7.3 in which the progression of an athlete from a home country programme to the elite programmes is clearly indicated and the NGB makes use of a UK centralised training facility and programme in order to nurture talented players. Even if the structure is designed specifically with transition in mind, the process is not necessarily smooth for all sports. Interviewee A, a senior official in an Olympic NGB (organisation O1), described a disconnection between the England programmes and high performance systems run by the UK-level NGB for the sport, which has led to it being challenging for athletes to progress to a high enough standard to be part of the elite system, and therefore compete at the Olympic Games. Interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O3), stated that connecting talent pathways at the home country level to the world class programme within the sport’s GB organisation, which is funded by UK Sport, is an issue: “We’re very weak underneath and we get a lot of money to try to deliver Olympic medals and UK Sport wants that money very much pinnacle-focused and we’ve always argued that until we get the pathways right it’s very hard to just spend a lot of money and deliver a lot of medals up here.” (Interview D, 2 April 2012). However, interviewee E, a senior official from Olympic NGB E (organisation O4), described a much more positive scenario in their sport whereby the home country and UK NGBs have been able to work under a common vision, whilst retaining a focus on their own political imperatives: “what we’ve been working on in the last two to three years is creating more of a partnership working between those four organisations because there are different political drivers within the Home Countries” (Interview E, 26/04/2012). Interviewee S, a senior official from a national, non-government sport organisation, stated the devolved nature of sport whereby with the four home nations competing separately and then having to come together for Olympic and Paralympic competition, and sometimes European- and World-level competitions, “is a very significant factor in having a harmonised, streamlined and effective sports policy and pathway” (Interview S, 03/06/0213). An issue that
interviewee S highlighted was that there is nothing that the sport sector can do about devolution because it is a fundamental part of the governance of the country and affects a range of policy areas, not just sport.

Figure 7.4 – GB Badminton Player Performance Pathway

![GB Badminton Player Performance Pathway Diagram](http://www.badmintonengland.co.uk/text.asp?section=2169#.U6hkwpSwJuA)

Despite improved clarity in the WCPP since 2006 when UK Sport assumed full responsibility for the programme, the devolved nature of sport and the resultant structures to govern sports and develop athletes have been problematic. While sports articulate their objectives and the performance pathway, there remains a gap between home country and GB-level elite sport. Talent transfer has been a crucial new feature of the landscape of elite sport development in the past 5-10 years and its emergence may be explained by the failings of traditional TID and the political challenges of devolution but also the imminence of hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London in 2012.

### 7.2.2 Talent transfer

One of the most significant changes to programmes within this area of elite sport policy has been the introduction of talent transfer schemes managed by UK Sport. UK Sport described the establishment of these programmes as a way to “assist

---

Sports in filling identified gaps in their talent pipelines" and the hosting of London 2012 was said to have "provided a unique opportunity" to begin this work (UK Sport, 2012: 34). So a combination of failings within some sports to produce elite athletes and the timing of the London Games were catalysts for the talent transfer programmes. A specific team was established to manage these programmes, called the UK Talent Team, which is a partnership between UK Sport and the English Institute of Sport (UK Sport, 2012). The programmes target people with specific attributes and experiences and ask them to apply to the programme. This is followed by testing days to identify the participants with the most potential. The people that are selected through this process are fast-tracked into WCPP in a specific sport. Since 2007 there have been seven programmes managed by the UK Talent Team, two of which, Paralympic Potential and Fighting Chance, have been implemented twice. More information about the programmes is provided in Table 7.3. Over 7000 people have been assessed as part of the programmes and over 100 of those tested have been selected by NGBs to be part of the WCPP (UK Sport, 2014: 32). These programmes are often centred around preparation for Olympic and Paralympic Games so the driver and time expectation is clear from the title of the programme, for example, Fighting Chance: Battle for Brazil and Talent 2016: Tall and Talented. UK Sport lists the achievements of athletes identified through this programme, which includes two Olympic medals and one Paralympic medal at London 2012, but there is no evidence of rigorous evaluation of the programmes.

Talent transfer programmes were described by Interviewee W, a senior figure in British sport, as being “of a time and a place”, that time and place being the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: “it made a hell of a lot of sense for London [2012] because it was such an opportunity” (Interview W, 20/11/2013). The programmes were relevant to the British team’s preparations for the Games as some sports needed accelerate the production of elite athletes in order to achieve top results. However, interviewee W was not wholly supportive of the system as a long-term solution and stated, “I’ve never felt they’re [talent transfer programmes] something we should be doing in twenty years time” (Interview W, 20/11/2013). However, as indicated in Table 7.3, the programmes are continuing with the most recent programmes focusing on forthcoming Summer and Winter Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.
Table 7.3 – Talent transfer programmes managed by UK Sport 2007-2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target sports</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sporting Giants</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Rowing, handball or volleyball</td>
<td>Age: 16 – 25 years &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: Tall (a minimum of 6’3” or 190cm for men and 5’11” or 180cm for women) &lt;br&gt; Experience: Some sort of athletic background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls4Gold</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Bob skeleton, canoeing, modern pentathlon, rowing and sailing</td>
<td>Age: 17 - 25 years &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: fit, powerful and strong, mentally tough and competitive &lt;br&gt; Experience: Competing in any sport at county/regional level &lt;br&gt; Other: Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitch to Podium</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Age: Not specified &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: Not specified &lt;br&gt; Experience: Young football and rugby players who have been unsuccessful in securing a professional contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall and Talented</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Rowing, basketball</td>
<td>Age: 15 - 22 years &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: Exceptionally tall (men over 190cm and women over 180cm). Quick, agile and skilful AND/OR fit, powerful and strong &lt;br&gt; Experience: Competing in any sport at a minimum of county/regional level &lt;br&gt; Other: Mentally tough and competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting chance</td>
<td>2009 and 2013</td>
<td>Taekwondo</td>
<td>Age: Not specified &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: Not specified &lt;br&gt; Experience: High level combat athletes from all kicking orientated martial arts, including taekwondo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralympic Potential</td>
<td>2009 and 2013</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Age: 15 - 35 years &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: an impairment &lt;br&gt; Experience: sporting background in any sport &lt;br&gt; Other: desire, commitment and determination to win</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power2Podium</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Age: 15 - 26 years &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: speed, power and raw talent &lt;br&gt; Experience: Not specified &lt;br&gt; Other: Focused on 2016 Olympic Games in Rio and 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 4 Gold: Canoeing</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Canoeing</td>
<td>Age: 15-17 and 18-25 years &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: fit, powerful, competitive female athletes &lt;br&gt; Experience: Regional level for girls (15-17), national level for women (18-25) in any sport &lt;br&gt; Other: focus on 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls 4 Gold: Disability athletics</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Disability athletics</td>
<td>Age: 16-35 years &lt;br&gt; Physical attributes: wheelchair user or short stature &lt;br&gt; Experience: background in sport or physical training. &lt;br&gt; Other: The girls must be fit and strong, mentally tough and competitive and up for a once in a lifetime opportunity to become a part of Britain's sporting elite.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from UK Sport website

There are certain targeted sports that are featured prominently in the programmes listed above – for example, rowing, combat sports and team sports - and some notable absences. Cycling and athletics are two of the biggest Olympic and Paralympic sports within the UK, both in terms of profile, success measured in terms of medals won and amount of funding received from UK Sport for their World Class programmes. The CEOs of these two sports’ NGBs were involved in giving evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy and both stated that their sports had not been involved in structured talent transfer and identification programmes for different reasons. Ian Drake, CEO of British Cycling cited the advanced development of the talent pathway within cycling as a reason for talent transfer programmes being unnecessary within the sport as it is already identifying and developing enough athletes of a high calibre for its Olympic and Paralympic teams and Niels de Vos, CEO of British Athletics stated that the nature of the disciplines within athletics was too complicated to fit into systematic talent transfer programmes (House of Lords, 2013). While there are technical rationales for these sports not being involved in UK Sport’s talent transfer strategy, such as the technical complexities of some disciplines, e.g.: pole vault, triple jump, it may also be that the strength of these NGBs have meant that they have been able to resist the prescribed programmes of UK Sport and instead develop programmes that suit their specific sport. As interviewee W stated, the need for talent transfer programmes may indicate a weakness in the development processes of certain sports and using talent transfer programmes to get people into the sport and develop them quickly is “putting a sticky plaster over something” and not addressing the lack of long-term development in the sports (Interview W, 20/11/2013).

In addition to the programmes run by UK Sport, individual sports also focus upon transferring talented people into their sports. British Triathlon runs a programme called TriGold. This programme focuses on finding people within a specific age range (18-30 years) with strong results in running plus a background in competitive swimming to channel into their performance programmes. Even though triathlon is a three-discipline event, the criteria for entry to the programme focus primarily on a high level of running ability, with swimming as a secondary criterion, suggesting that British Triathlon has identified that this is the best basis for identifying potential elite-level triathletes. The programme is funded by a private sponsor rather than through public funding (British Triathlon website32).

32 http://www.britishtriathlonmedia.org/trigold, accessed 02/04/2014
Talent transfer not only exists within structured programmes: there is a general awareness of the possibility of athletes entering a sport later and developing within that sport quickly if they have a certain set of physiological attributes. Interviewee A, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O1), stated that performance experts within that specific sport have identified the possibility of developing an athlete to World Class standard within a four-year period, as long as that person had certain physical attributes and levels of fitness: “Our performance team in GB firmly believe that you can take a female athlete, a good female athlete we could identify in a university, take them out of a sport, put them into [our sport] and put them into the Games within a cycle” (Interview A, 16/02/2013).

Furthermore, interviewee G, a senior official from a commercially successful, non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO3), and interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O5), both speculated about people transferring out of their sports due to being able to transfer their skills, fitness and general physical attributes to other sports. There are examples of people moving from athletics into other sports: discus thrower Lawrence Okoye transferred to American Football and sprinter Craig Pickering moved to bobsled; and there are numerous examples of rugby players transferring between the codes of Rugby Union and Rugby League. Some athletes who develop quickly are not part of a talent transfer programme but are self-selected: they come into a sport later than usual and find they have specific talent and attributes that allow them to progress quickly. British athletes Sarah Storey and Rebecca Romero have both successfully transferred between sports and achieved elite status in both: Storey transferred from swimming to cycling and Romero from rowing to cycling, with both cases being the result of self-selection. Interviewee A, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB (organisation O1), gave an example of an athlete within their sport who had not participated in the sport prior to the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 but began competing and qualified for the London Olympic Games and went on to win a medal. Interviewee W, a senior figure in British sport, noted that when talented individuals are discovered, they have usually been involved in sport already: “Where we find talent out of the blue, invariably it is hovering around in some sort of sport environment where that person either found themselves down a blind alley or is just about to break through because they’re a product of a club, a venue, a coach: something, somewhere got them going in that way” (interview W, 20/11/2013).
A potential issue that can result from talent transfer programmes is that by transferring to a new sport, an athlete is lost to their old sport. The UK Sport talent programme ‘Pitch to Podium’ specifically targeted football and rugby players who have not been able to get professional contracts in their sport so they have been rejected from their original sport, albeit they have only been rejected from the elite level and they could have continued to play in lower leagues or at the semi-professional level rather than leaving the sport completely. Similarly, in cases where the transfer is self-selecting or the result of scouting, the athlete’s original sport risks losing not just a talented athlete but also a future potential coach, official or administrator. Interviewee V disagreed with this hypothesis and stated that anything that keeps a talented person in sport is good for sport as a whole. Interviewee W questioned whether athletes that have transferred to a new sport would ever have the same experience and commitment to their new sport as someone in that sport that has been through a more traditional, long-term development process to become an elite athlete. So the athlete overall experience could be very different for a transferred athlete. Interviewee V, a senior official from a non-government national sport organisation, gave an example of early talent transfer whereby the sport of short track speed skating is seeking to identify young people with an interest and talent in ice skating and channel them into speed skating, which may prevent them from getting involved in other ice-based sports such as figure skating.

The process of fast tracking talent could serve to undermine the traditional structures of sport development through clubs as people are removed from these organisations and placed into centralised training programmes. This can challenge the long-standing institutions within British sport; both in terms of the ‘bricks and mortar’ institutions of clubs but also the deeply ingrained ‘British’ approach to sport and the development of high performance athletes. The concept of talent transfer, though relatively recently conceived and applied to high performance sport in the UK, has become a significant element within the landscape. The decision by the IOC to award the hosting of the 2012 Games to London could be described as a critical juncture (Cairney, 2012) that led to talent development as a whole, and talent transfer more specifically as a new part of the landscape, beginning to be more deeply ingrained in the high performance system and there has been growth in programmes to support talent development and transfer.
7.3 Funding

Before specific funding was allocated to the development of talented athletes, financial support was very sporadic. It was noted in the Cunningham Report (2001) that financial support was needed for the development of clubs and coaches in order to support the development of talent, as well as investment in facilities. Outside of infrastructure support, there was no systematic funding for Olympic sports.

The World Class Performance Programme (WCPP) includes financial support for athletes at the ‘Development’ level. This level was the responsibility of Sport England (along with the talent level) until 2006 when all responsibility for the WCPP was transferred to UK Sport. UK Sport explain their investment in high performance sport as an eight-year pathway: this means that athletes are funded for up to eight years before they are expected to be medal contenders at the Olympic or Paralympic Games, so athletes can be funded now who are expected to be successful at the 2020 Olympic or Paralympic Games. Those athletes would be described as being on the ‘Development’ level of funding. However, the funding settlements that are agreed with the NGBs are for four years, or one Olympic cycle, at a time so there is no guarantee that the funding will be available for an athlete on the development level of support in the four years leading into their target Olympic Games. The funding cycles are heavily influenced by the wider context of the government’s four-year funding cycle and also the 4-5 year election cycles. According to one senior official from a public-funded national sports organisation: “the greatest challenge [facing UK Sport] is securing the resources because this is an expensive business and it won’t get cheaper” (Interview P, 06/03/2013).

It is possible that the current pattern of athlete funding results in a financial incentive for athletes to move between sports. For example, in athletics, the strict criteria for an athlete to receive funding may mean that a high standard athlete misses out on support from the NGB and therefore elects to move to another sport where they might receive greater financial support, or even a salary if they move to a professional team sport. A rugby player who successfully moves from elite level rugby league to elite level rugby union could triple their earning because the RFL Super League annual salary cap currently stands at £1.65million (www.therfl.co.uk) while the rugby union Premiership salary cap is £4.65million (www.premiershiprugby.com). Within Olympic sport, the cyclist Emma Pooley, who won a silver medal at the Beijing Olympic Games, has stated that she has earned
more money by competing in triathlon and marathon running than in her preferred sport of cycling and splits her time between competing in cycling road racing and triathlon (Williams, 2014).

As noted in the previous chapter, financial aid from philanthropists can be an important source of support for developing athletes. While SportsAid predominantly focuses on young athletes who are not yet eligible for funding from the National Lottery via WCPP, it works alongside Jaguar to provide support through the Jaguar Academy of Sport. The Jaguar Academy of Sport combines financial support with mentoring from current and retired senior athletes and supports 50 specially selected young athletes between the ages of 12 and 25 years\(^3\). The list of young athletes currently being supported indicates that many are already national, continental and world champions or medallists at junior level in their sports so they can be described as being at the development level of elite sport (Bloom, 1985). As noted in the previous case study, this additional source of financial support for athletes eases the burden on public funds.

Depending on personal circumstances, it may be possible for an athlete in the development phase of their competitive career to decline public funding from their sport’s NGB, which can result in a greater degree of independence for the athlete but may harm the medal-winning potential of the NGB. One example is Jodie Williams, a British sprinter: Williams declined the offer of National Lottery funding from British Athletics and went against the wishes of the then head coach of the British athletics team in deciding not to compete at the senior IAAF World Championships in 2011 when she was still a junior level athlete and still in school (Kessel, 2011). This case suggests that an athlete in receipt of public funding may have to relinquish a certain amount of control over their career to the NGB in exchange for financial support and other services, which may not be conducive to a balanced lifestyle, including education. Programmes such as TASS, as detailed in the previous chapter, may help to relieve this tension by supporting the athlete whilst they are still in education.

\(^3\) [http://www.jaguar.co.uk/about-jaguar/academy-of-sport/about.html#skip-tertiary](http://www.jaguar.co.uk/about-jaguar/academy-of-sport/about.html#skip-tertiary) accessed 02/04/2014
7.4 Political salience

Interviewee P, a senior official from a public-funded national sports organisation, and interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, both described a process of evolution of the elite sport policy system, rather than it being driven by prescriptive government policy. This is particularly pertinent to the area of talent development and transfer. This area has not been guided by specific policies but rather it is part of the system that is driven by UK Sport and the NGBs. There is no evidence of specific government policy relating to the development and transfer of talent within the elite sport system in the UK beyond the clear aspiration for medal success at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This is in contrast with the previous case study where it was shown that there was explicit policy for youth talent identification by the Labour government and there is implicit support for this area by the current coalition government. As noted in the introduction, this part of elite sport is not easily defined and is highly technical, which may be a reason why there has not been a steer by the current or previous government about how it should be resourced or managed.

Interviewee Q, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, stated that most politicians do not have a full understanding of sport so they are not inclined to focus on “the machinations of the performance system” (Interview Q, 08/04/2013). The outcomes of winning medals or international titles are important to the government but they are not involved in suggesting how this might be achieved in terms of taking an athlete from a talented young person to a World Class performer so the government is clear about the desired outcomes but less knowledgeable or concerned about the process of achieving those outcomes. Where the government has been instrumental has been in reinforcing the prioritisation of Olympic sports and the focusing on competitive sports activities in schools.

UK Sport successfully negotiated the landscape by making significant improvements to the talent development process after the responsibility for talent was transferred to them from Sport England in 2006. The increased resource that was available to UK Sport after this change was channelled into specific programmes designed to gain results in certain sports in a condensed period of time as the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games approached. The speeding up of the development of talent through talent transfer programmes has accommodated the government’s desire for the British team to be successful at the London 2012 Games but also served to give greater power to UK Sport by showing that the organisation’s approach to talent development yields results. Although it was noted above that some interviewees
were critical of the ongoing use of talent transfer programmes it is clear that it is UK Sport that will decide whether they continue or not.

7.5 Conclusions

The policy environment and structures, in particular the ongoing, cross-party support for the prioritisation of Olympic and Paralympic success, rather than specific policies from government, has shaped talent development in the past 5-10 years. The landscape has been further shaped by short windows of opportunity in which UK Sport and the NGBs that it supports have to demonstrate their success, hence the need for new ways to identify and develop talent and the growing competitiveness of the international sport environment. As the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games approached, the political imperative for success intensified but it was the responsibility of UK Sport and Sport England to find solutions to the policy problem, rather than the government directing the programmes.

In the 1990s, there had been general rhetoric about the development of talented people and the need for a clear pathway to reach elite levels of competition. An initial critical juncture occurred when UK Sport was established as the agency responsible solely for high performance sport. This was reinforced by the recommendations set forth in The Cunningham Report (2001) about the importance of systematic development of talented individuals. The awarding of the hosting of the London 2012 Games presented a further critical juncture in the establishment of talent development as a priority and UK Sport was able to present itself as a leader in this field by taking on responsibility of the lower levels of the WCPP and providing new solutions to the problem, including the talent transfer programmes. The success of the talent transfer programmes enhanced discourse around the possibility of fast tracking talent, with the case of Helen Glover held up as being particularly significant both within sport and by the media.

The need for success has also been driven by international sport becoming more competitive. In the international environment, there is ever greater competition for two main reasons: firstly there are more nations taking part so the competition is bigger; and, secondly, more nations are focusing upon developing elite sport and approaches are becoming more homogenous so the competition is of better quality. In the face of this competition, there has been a need for the UK to innovate and the
systematic talent transfer programmes have been the most significant manifestation of this. UK Sport has been able to demonstrate continuous improvement of results through its targeted interventions and as a result it has gained more resource and leverage, both within government and over NGBs. The success of the programmes that UK Sport runs has justified the investment from government and the decision to move all responsibilities for talent to UK Sport from Sport England in 2006.

Reflecting on Hall’s (1986) model of three levels of change, there has certainly been a change in the first order because the intensity of funding has increased, both in terms of funding for UK Sport since 2006 and additional monies for Sport England’s ETP since 2009. The introduction of talent transfer programmes by UK Sport and the inception of the ETP could be described as second order changes because these are new programmes, or instruments, introduced into the landscape in order to address the ongoing policy priority of developing talented athletes and increasing the likelihood of the success of British athletes. The change of government in 2010 has not altered the policy landscape for the nurturing and transferring of talent: funding was reduced across the landscape due to the financial crisis but the hosting of the Olympic Games in 2012 meant that support was generally maintained and policy objectives were not altered. The second order changes noted above have refined rather than fundamentally altered the policy landscape and these programmes have been predominantly driven by the lead agencies, UK Sport and Sport England, rather than the government.

In the description of historical institutionalism in chapter 3, it was noted that a key element of the theory is that the current situation is shaped by historical context. In the case of talent development, the past situation has been a fragmented, unstructured, at times happenstance approach for many sports: it has not been guided by specific policy from government and the sports councils have taken a hands-off approach in the past. Therefore it could be argued that the current situation and attempts to create a more structured system have been hindered by the lack of an existing institution. It can be argued that institutionalisation can occur rapidly if certain conditions exist, which in this context may include ongoing commitment to the objective of Olympic and Paralympic success supported by positive national mood and orchestrated by UK Sport directing the NGBs that it funds but in this case the path is still very much in what Sydow (2005) termed the ‘path formation’ phase. While it could be argued that an institution has been established within the policy landscape consisting of the value of talent development and the input of the various
organisations or funding sources, this institution still lacks complete clarity and cohesion.
Chapter 8 – Sustaining World Class Athletes

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the maintenance of elite athletes at the very top of the performance system. One of DCMS’s stated aims on its website is: “We want to continue to identify our best athletes and help them train, give them more opportunities to compete in the UK before the next Olympic and Paralympic Games, and make sure that UK elite sport continues to be free from doping.” This indicates that elite sport, with a specific focus on the Olympic and Paralympic Games, is a priority for the current government, which has shown little change in policy from previous Labour governments.

As noted in previous chapters, the elite sport environment in the UK does not exist in isolation but is part of and interacts with the international context of elite sport. There have been changes to the amount and the quality of competition on the international sporting stage. There are two key reasons for this that can be identified. Firstly, there are more nations in the world than there were 30 years ago due to the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and other shifts in politics that have led to the formation of new nations (for example the dividing of Sudan into two nations – Sudan and South Sudan – in 2011). Interviewee D, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O3), noted, “every time I go to a competition there are three new countries” (Interview D, 02/04/2012). Secondly, more countries are dedicating resource to the systematic development of their elite sports teams. The SPLISS study (De Bosscher et al, 2008) has found increasing convergence of approaches by governments to developing elite sport, thus indicating that the value of elite sport has become ingrained in many countries’ policies. Houlihan and Zheng (2013) also provided evidence for this change to nations’ approaches to high performance sport and showed increases in public spending in the eight nations that they surveyed (New Zealand, Spain, Ireland, Norway, UK, South Korea, Japan and Sweden). Houlihan and Zheng’s work also highlighted that the number of countries competing in the Olympic Games increased from 159 at the 1988 Games in Seoul to 205 at the 2012 Games in London and the number of countries winning at least one medal increased from 52 in 1988 to 85 in 2012 thus indicating an intensification of international competitiveness.
A further factor in the international context of world class sport is the operational environment of international federations and the events that they govern. For example, event and rule changes decided by international federations and the IOC can have a strong impact on the success of the British team for a number of reasons. Within cycling, the British team’s medal-winning capacity was impacted upon by a rule change between the 2008 to the 2012 Olympic Games according to which countries were only allowed to enter one competitor into races and therefore only one medal was on offer per nation. In the men’s individual sprint event, Team GB won gold and silver in 2008 but could only compete for one medal in 2012. Conversely, a recent rule change in the women’s team pursuit may well benefit the British team. The event now has an increased distance (3000m to 4000m) and team size (3 riders to 4) and adapting to this change is within the capacity of the existing team operations in the UK. British Cycling’s performance director was quoted as saying, “It has killed off some nations – they just don’t have the depth. We were very happy with the change. We have that squad.” (quoted by Fotheringham, 2013). Interviewee W, a senior figure in British sport34, speculated that the international federations’ motivations for rule changes may be to ensure that one nation does not become too dominant within the sport. The same interviewee also noted that innovation and new technology play a role in this decision-making as the international federations want competition to be fair and not give advantage to a few nations that have more opportunity, usually brought about by more money, to use new technology. An example of this was FINA banning certain types of swimsuits and dictating the material and fit of suits that were allowed in competition (BBC Sport, 2009)

As noted with regards to age-group competition, sports experience different competition structures. Continental and global championships are commonplace across sports and some sports have further international competitive opportunities if they are part of the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games and/or Commonwealth Games. The status of different sports has been shown to influence the political interest in them in the UK, especially if they are popular in the UK or if they are Olympic sports. Several interviewees in this research (including interviewees F, G and L) made reference to the “big five” sports, namely football, tennis, cricket, rugby union and rugby league, which are popular participation and spectator sports in the

34Interviewee W has held many positions within sport in the UK including being an elite athlete, a coach and a senior official at a NGB and a government agency over many years and therefore is not referred to in this research as representing a specific organisation.
UK and whose NGBs are considered to hold a relatively privileged position in as much as these sports’ senior officials regularly meet with the Minister for Sport. Interviewee L, a representative of government, indicated the power of these sports and stated that they have the power to stop radical change in the sporting landscape: “they’re big hitters and they’ll get in to see the Prime Minister” (Interview L, 06/11/2012). The Olympic and Paralympic sports that are funded by UK Sport could also be seen to hold a privileged position as they have direct relationships with UK Sport, which in turn has a close relationship with the government, in particular the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport and the Minister for Sport. Interviewee C, a senior official from a non-Olympic NGB (organisation NO1), a sport which is not one of the ‘big five’, stated that the sport does not have an opportunity to engage with the government on the subject of high performance because the sport only receives public funding from Sport England, which is primarily focused on community sport objectives. So if a sport is not one of the larger sports with a high profile, nor an Olympic sport, it has limited opportunities to engage with government when it comes to elite sport.

Hosting of the Olympic Games has been a significant driver in developing elite sport policy both in the UK and in other recent host nations and has presented what Kingdon (1995) termed a ‘policy window’. Brown (2008: 444) described the impact of hosting the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver on Canadian sport policy as bringing about “new clarity of vision” in Canada and that “The value of Olympic sport is winning”, which manifested most strongly in the “Own the Podium” policy. This focus on achievement and ‘owning the podium’ that guided policy ahead of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games was cited as being in contrast to previous national rhetoric the focused on pursuing excellence in sport but not measuring success through the winning of medals. Brown (2008) questioned the longevity of this focus and whether it would remain after the 2010 Vancouver Games were over. ‘Own the Podium’ still exists today: it is a partnership between Sport Canada and the National Olympic Committee and National Paralympic Committee and it supports the national sports organisations (NSOs) to “increase medal counts by Canadian athletes at Olympic and Paralympic Summer and Winter Games” and the support comes in the form of “Pooled resources, expert based decision-making, and targeted sport funding.” (Canadian Heritage website 35 ). London’s hosting of the 2012 Olympic and

Paralympic Games has certainly impacted upon the British government’s policies in support of high performance sport.

8.2 Organisations, Programmes And Partnerships

The relationship between UK Sport and the NGBs that it funds was generally viewed as positive by the interviewees. A key factor in the positive working relationship between UK Sport and the NGBs that it funds has been the continuity of its vision and its policies: interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated that this continuity has “allowed stability in the system, that’s why we’re starting to see successes across the system” (Interview B, 01/03/2012). There have been tensions in the relationships as there is a fundamental power structure with UK Sport as the funder, and therefore the party with more power. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport36, stated that UK Sport was not always well-liked by the NGBs because “you never are if you’re the people who fund people and particularly if you stop funding some people you’re not very popular” (Interview R, 02/05/2013).

The relationship between UK Sport and the British Olympic Association (BOA) has also been problematic at times due to an apparent overlap in their remits. Interviewee E, a senior official from an Olympic sport NGB (organisation O4), highlighted coach education as an area that both organisations were seeking to tackle and interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, questioned the need for the BOA to carry out an anti-doping review when UK Sport and later UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) managed this area of British sport. The BOA appointed Sir Clive Woodward to the role of ‘Director of Sport’ in 2006, an appointment described by Hart (2013) as “controversial” and “stepping on the toes” of UK Sport and NGB personnel, but that role was relatively short-lived and has since been removed. As a result of these issues, the relationship between the BOA and UK Sport could have been described as dysfunctional in the past but interviewee V, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, described a generally collaborative working relationship, a view endorsed by interviewee R who acknowledged that, post-2012, the relationship had been more complementary and supportive.

36 Interviewee R has held many positions within sport in the UK including being an elite athlete and a senior official for a number of different government and non-government sports organisations over many years and therefore is not referred to in this research as representing a specific organisation.
Interviewee S, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, stated the relationships between various parties within the high performance sport landscape had not always been positive but that the drive for success at London 2012 was a key factor in establishing better partnerships. The same interviewee described an ideal triangular relationship of the funder (in this case UK Sport), the NGBs and the National Olympic Committee or National Paralympic Committee and said that this relationship “is potentially a positive and effective one if you work correctly together” (Interview S, 03/06/2013) but acknowledged that tensions are likely because of duplication or the peculiarities of specific issues. One such issue that the interviewee cited was the setting of medal targets because UK Sport and the government always publish medal targets but the BOA and BPA do not and the athletes are competing under the banner of the Olympic or Paralympic teams, not UK Sport.

As noted in the previous case study, devolution can be an issue in the UK as there is tension between the UK and home countries where nationalist ambitions conflict with the medal targets for the British team. A side effect of the devolved nature of sport is that it offers some athletes the option to leave the UK-level, elite support system and ‘return home’ to their home country. Scottish badminton players Susan Egelstaff and Imogen Bankier both chose to leave the GB Badminton central training programme and train in their home nation of Scotland instead (Egelstaff, 2013). As noted in the previous chapter, one of the explanations for UK Sport assuming full responsibility for all levels of the World Class Performance Programme was to ensure that there was equal provision for representatives of all the home nations, as stated by interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, but these examples show that athletes have the right to decline that support and seek support from their home nation NGB and other sources of funding and expertise, which in these two cases was the Scottish Institute of Sport.

UK Sport’s approach to decision-making about investment in sports is known as No Compromise and this approach was adopted in 2001 (UK Sport, 2012). Interviewee P, a senior official from a public-funded sports organisation, described the initial distribution of funding before the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games as using a “first come, first served” approach (Interview P, 06/03/2013), meaning that NGBs that were fit for purpose to receive public monies and had a strategy in place for their high performance sport received the funding that was available. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, described the early years of National Lottery investment in high
performance sport as lacking a robust system of decision-making and said that the system had “evolved” rather than being “driven” (Interview R, 02/05/2013). The same interviewee went on to state that the introduction of No Compromise caused “a massive cultural shift” and a change in mind-set amongst the NGBs that were funded by UK Sport (Interview R, 02/05/2013). Although UK Sport drove the development of the No Compromise approach, interviewee P, a senior official from a government-funded national sport organisation, stated that there was no policy guidance given to UK Sport on how it should allocate the money. However, Interviewee S, a senior official from a non-government national sport organisation, whilst acknowledging the importance of the introduction of the National Lottery funding as “being about cash”, noted that is was also about a “systematic approach” and that UK Sport had the task of “setting that strategy” to invest the money that was made available (Interview S, 03/06/2013). Using Hall’s (1986) typology of change, the introduction of No Compromise indicated a second-order change, the introduction of a new instrument to achieve the policy objective, which in this case was the development of a high performance system.

A key element of the No Compromise approach is the rigorous monitoring of spending both in terms of the results that sports achieve but also how they are governed and managed. One of the headline principles in UK Sport’s Investment Principles document (UK Sport website37), which guides its allocation of funding for the Rio 2016 funding cycle, is “We will only invest in sports bodies which demonstrate the required standards of leadership, governance, financial management and administration” (Principle 3). This principle follows on from the modernisation agenda that was initiated by the Labour government. Interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated UK Sport is not only interested in medals as an outcome of funding but also how the funds are used and whether there is value for money. The same interviewee said that scrutiny from UK Sport “is as robust as I’ve ever seen it” (Interview B, 01/03/2012). So even though the government policy of modernisation is no longer active, the principles of modernisation remain relevant and UK Sport seeks continual evidence of good governance from the organisations that it funds.

The robust monitoring of performance and governance also includes potential sanctions for those NGBs that do not comply with UK Sport’s standards. In the

Investment Principles document it is also stated that UK Sport will not “invest in an organisation where there is evidence that the governance of that sport puts at risk the delivery of its long-term performance objectives” and “Consistent failure to meet the required standard will result in the withholding or withdrawal of funding” (Principle 3). In 2013, governance issues in boxing meant that the British Amateur Boxing Association (BABA), which receives funding from UK Sport to invest in the high performance programme for Olympic boxing, was at risk of losing its funding for the Rio programme. Due to problems with governance and the resignation of the chairman of the organisation, UK Sport explored the possibility of setting up a separate body to deal with funding for British elite boxers. Eventually the internal disputes at BABA were resolved so no sanctions were imposed on the organisation. This approach is also applied in Australia: John Coates, the President of the Australian Olympic Committee, gave evidence to the House of Lords inquiry on the Olympic legacy and stated that sports that are funded by the Australian Sports Commission have been ordered to improve their corporate governance or risk losing 20% of their funding (House of Lords, 2013).

There has been some criticism of No Compromise and it was a point for significant discussion during the House of Lords inquiry into the legacy of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and recorded in the subsequent report, Keeping the flame alive: The Olympic and Paralympic legacy (House of Lords, 2013). Whilst many of the individuals called to give evidence to the committee were in favour of No Compromise, the report also highlighted the comments of Richard Callicott, from the British Volleyball Association, who argued that a longer period of investment was needed in order for sports to develop sufficiently to contend for medals (House of Lords, 2013). However logical this argument may have been, high performance sport in the UK has for a long time been dominated by relatively short-term timeframes for achieving success and demonstrating a return on investment due to government funding periods and election cycles. The report also noted the inconsistent application of No Compromise in the example of British Swimming, which did not lose very much funding from the 2012 funding cycle to the 2016 funding cycle despite relatively poor results (a target of 5-7 medals was set but only 3 medals won) and the organisation was given time to investigate its poor performance. The House of Lords committee acknowledged the success of the No Compromise approach but suggested that it should be more flexible in order to support more fledgling sports in achieving greater results. The government responded to this recommendation in 2014 by stating: “We have no plans to review this approach as we have no wish to
give other nations a competitive advantage over Team GB” (Cabinet Office, 2014: 6). This assertion by the government was supported by statistics indicating the huge improvements made by the British team at the Olympic Games thus indicating the importance of evidence to the government in setting and justifying their policies and reflects the government and UK Sport’s determination to maintain the policy objective equilibrium.

Interviewee Q, a senior official from a non-government national sport organisation, also highlighted some of the disquiet relating to No Compromise and questioned whether there should have been revisions to the system after the 2012 Games that would have allowed fledgling sports a longer funded period during which to develop their high performance systems. The same interviewee stated that there should have been greater public discussion about the merit of No Compromise but suggested that it has retained its position due to positive results and “when things are successful, people don’t question [them]” (Interview Q, 08/04/2013). Some efforts to change the No Compromise approach have involved trying to question the underpinning philosophy of the approach but this philosophy, based on the policy objective of winning medals at the Olympic Games, is too deeply ingrained and has become an institutional norm within elite sport in the UK and, as described within sociological institutionalism, norms shape interactions within an institution. First- and second-order changes in the landscape, namely the increase in funding to UK Sport from 2006 and the refining of the group of sports that receive funding, have reinforced the policy objectives and increased the chance of success. Furthermore, the positive results garnered through No Compromise have contributed to the establishment of a path dependency because the potential of alternative options for supporting high performance sport have been limited and No Compromise has largely gone unchallenged. This also relates to Lukes’ second dimension of power and the possibility of non-decisions: the success of No Compromise means that UK Sport is able to keep proposals that challenge the No Compromise strategy off the agenda.

The No Compromise approach became even stricter for the period up to the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016. Interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated that UK Sport has been very clear about the targets for the sports that it funds: “[UK Sport’s] investment guide for Rio is very clear – it’s about medal success. It’s about podium success in Olympic sport – bronze, silver, gold – and it’s about gold medal success in Paralympic sport” (Interview B, 01/03/2012). The guidelines issued by British Athletics for athlete funding for
2013/2014 also indicates the importance of medals: “during the Rio cycle, the aim of the Olympic WCPP is to win medals at the Olympic Games” so any funded athletes must be potential medallists (British Athletics, 2013: 1 – emphasis in original document). In addition, UK Sport has stopped its support for sports including handball, water polo and wheelchair fencing that are not considered to be good medal prospects for the 2016 or 2020 Olympic Games. This indicates an ongoing refining of the organisation’s strategy but it risks being perceived as extreme elitism and it is possible that public mood, to use Kingdon’s (1995) terminology, will turn against this approach however there is little evidence of change in attitudes among either politicians or the general public.

As part of the Labour government’s modernisation plans, sports that had previously been governed and funded at home country level only established UK-wide organisations in 2006. For example, in the sport of hockey Great Britain Hockey Limited was established in 2006 and its role includes “ensuring the preparation, selection and performance of both men’s and women’s GB Hockey squads and their participation in the Olympic Games” (GB Hockey website). This structural change indicated a desire by UK Sport and the government to keep tighter control of the use of public funds being distributed for elite preparation. However, this new structure went against the tide of devolution. This change has been problematic for some sports as there is a disconnection between the home nations’ work and the high performance sport end of their sport, as outlined in the previous case study.

Ahead of the 2012 Games, a policy decision was taken by government to ensure that Team GB was represented in all sports in addition to seeking to achieve 4th place in the Olympic Games medal table and second place at the Paralympic Games (UK Sport, 2012). This decision was a result of discussions between the government and UK Sport during which UK Sport presented evidence that outlined what level of success the British team could achieve if a specific amount of money was invested. This process was described as “robust” (Interviewee Q, 08/04/2013), “a hard-nosed business case” (Interviewee R, 02/05/2013) and a “compelling evidence-based case that could drive policy decisions” (Interviewee P, 06/03/2013). In addition, interviewee P, a senior official from a public-funded organisation, stated that there was a strong working relationship between the DCMS and UK Sport that pre-dated

---

this policy decision that meant that UK Sport was “well-positioned” to present the evidence for increased funding, thus indicating the importance of the relationship between UK Sport and the DCMS within the landscape (Interviewee P, 06/03/2013).

The process of making the decision about which sports to fund for London 2012 indicated a clear line of responsibility between the government’s role in setting the strategic objectives and UK Sport’s role in delivering these objectives. This relationship was exemplified and the tensions within the relationship exposed when, in 2009, there was a need to cut funding due to the financial crisis and there was a need for funding reductions across government spending. Interviewee W, a senior figure in British sport, described the scenario: UK Sport wanted to cut funding to the minor sports in order to protect the medal potential in other, bigger sports but the Labour government’s preference was to cut funding equally across all sports. This situation illustrated the tension within government and between government and UK Sport concerning equity and the maximising of the presence at the London 2012 Games on the one hand and maximisation of medals on the other: UK Sport was focused on the highest possible achievement and remaining consistent with the No Compromise strategy, whereas the government at the time wanted to support as many sports as possible to field teams at the London 2012 Games and in this situation the government’s priorities prevailed over those of UK Sport.

As a result of the decision to fund all Olympic and Paralympic sports from 2006, NGBs that had previously received very little resource, or in some case no funding at all, were given additional support to ensure that their sport would have representatives on the British team in 2012. As the policy was set in 2006, funding became available before the Beijing Games in 2008 to give the more fledgling sports more time, and therefore a stronger opportunity, to develop and build their teams. However, this decision did not result in rapid improvement for sports that had previously not fielded teams at the Olympic Games because they were underdeveloped compared with bigger sports, either in terms of their participation base (for example, handball) or the quality of their performance within the international context (for example, table tennis). In relation to the challenges faced by smaller sports, or sports that had less success, less media attention and low levels of participation in the UK, interviewee W, a senior figure in British sport, stated that the UK was “so far behind the world in some sports, culturally and in performance terms” (interview W, 20/11/2013) and gave an example of handball. The interviewee explained the situation of handball in Denmark where even small cities can have hundreds of
indoor handball courts designed specifically for the practice of that sport whereas there are no courts designed specifically for handball in the UK. This indicates the problem in trying to develop a sport, especially trying to develop it to the point of fielding a credible international squad, if there is no facilities base. Furthermore, the same interviewee described the Danish population as “obsessed with handball”, whereas there is no cultural following of the sport in the UK, compounding its struggle to develop in the short time frame offered (Interview W, 20/11/2013). However, the government’s and UK Sport’s priority for this group of sports was presence at the Games, rather than medal success.

After the 2012 Games, the situation reverted back to funding being available for selected Olympic and Paralympic sports based on the potential for those sports to win medals at the next Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016 for the ‘Podium’ level of the WCPP and 2020 for the ‘Development’ level. So while a key change came about in 2006 for the smaller Olympic and Paralympic sports, it was not a sustained change. Using Hall’s (1986) typology of change, this decision could be described either as a first-order change or a third-order change; it could be seen as merely an increase to the financial support for sports, and therefore would be described as a first-order change, or it could be identified as a shift in the policy objectives as the government changed its position on the number of sports to support and the standards associated with No Compromise were relaxed, thus it could be described as a third-order change. This example shows one of the challenges of implementing Hall’s typology and identifying the boundaries of the three orders of change.

As a result of these key decisions being made, 2006 could be described as a critical juncture (Cairney, 2012) in the development of a high performance policy institution. The combination of taking full control of the WCPP and having a significant increase in funding for high performance sport gave UK Sport more power in the landscape as the home country sports councils became marginalised and their role in Olympic preparations was lessened. The establishment of specific organisations for to support elite athletes reduced home country power as the new UK-level NGBs were responsible for their sport’s relationship with UK Sport, illustrating the extent to which modernisation led to a strengthened position in the landscape for UK Sport.

Olympic sports have been encouraged to set up centralised training facilities for their high performance athletes, including coaching and sport science support and UK Sport stated that “access to these facilities is critical to success” (UK Sport, 2012:
This recommendation has yielded mixed results, as NGBs have had to consider elements such as location, staffing and the cost of establishing the infrastructure, which has meant building completely new facilities for some sports. The establishment of centralised training facilities for elite athletes has also been useful for sports outside of UK Sport’s network: interviewee F, a senior official from a non-Olympic sport NGB (organisation NO2), stated that the establishment of the sport’s central training facility for the national squads has been “pivotal” both to improved performance and the sustainability of the national squad as both junior and senior teams use the same facility and services (Interview F, 16/05/2012). Some sports have limited options on where to be based because there are few suitable sites – for example there are very few indoor velodromes in the UK so cycling has limited options – while some sports have numerous potential sites where they could be based. British Cycling has one high performance centre in Manchester and the athletes that are part of the sport’s Olympic Podium Programme and Olympic Academy Programme train at the Manchester site, as outlined in chapter 7 (see Figure 7.3). British Swimming established five ‘Intensive Training Centres’, in Bath, Loughborough, Swansea, Stockport and Stirling, after the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 so there was a geographical spread of services, including support for swimmers in Scotland and Wales. However, due to funding cuts after the 2012 Olympic Games, three of the five have been closed, with only the centres in Bath and Loughborough remaining (Hope, 2013). Having sufficient staffing to support more than one site has been a problem for one sport: interviewee K, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O5), stated that the sport previously had eight centres for its high performance athletes but this was reduced to two centres because the programme reduced the number of athletes it supported and it was not possible to staff eight centres with quality personnel such as physiotherapists or biomechanics experts.

Centralised training centres and programmes can be problematic for individual athletes: as highlighted earlier in the chapter, the badminton player Imogen Bankier decided to leave the GB programme, based at Milton Keynes, and return to her home nation and stated that, “The environment and the new programme in Milton Keynes just weren’t working out for me” (quoted in Hope, 2012). Centralised training facilities and programmes are effective for some sports, and are sometimes a sport’s only option, as for cycling, but are not a guarantee for improving a sport’s

39 British Swimming does not support athletes from Northern Ireland because Northern Irish athletes compete alongside athletes from The Republic of Ireland and are therefore governed by Swim Ireland
performance and is dependent on creating a culture and an environment that athletes want to be part of. Former British Cycling performance director, Dave Brailsford stated, “The acid test is whether an athlete feels that they are missing out by not being there. If it's, 'You have to come here, we're going to force you to do it,' then the chances of that being successful are relatively limited,” (quoted in Riach, 2012). In the case of athletics, none of the three British gold medallists from the London 2012 Olympic Games, Mo Farah, Jessica Ennis and Greg Rutherford, train at the sport’s high performance centre at Loughborough University so arguably the influence of a centralised facility is limited in this specific case.

As well as having the physical infrastructure to support elite athletes, there has been a significant drive to develop appropriate personnel to develop the athletes. When responsibilities for the full WCPP transferred to UK Sport in 2006, the English Institute of Sport (EIS) also moved to be part of UK Sport. The EIS is responsible for providing services across sports science, sports medicine, technology and engineering to help improve British athletes’ performances. As well as working with UK Sport, EIS provides services to non-Olympic sports. Interviewee F, a senior official from a non-Olympic NGB, stated that the impact of working with EIS: “was a seismic shift in the way that we prepared for international matches” (Interview F, 16/05/2012). Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, highlighted the positioning of EIS within the landscape as important because it was misunderstood for a time and its role was not clear but the interviewee stated that this has improved over the last ten years and that things can improve further: “I think the institutes will get stronger in the next five years. I think that’s a real opportunity to align the institutes and the strategy of UK Sport much tighter [sic].” (Interview R, 02/05/2013).

The development of coaching has been another important area of focus for UK Sport. The UK Sport coaching team’s programmes seek to provide “professional development opportunities for Britain’s best coaches, in order to create sustainability of coaching excellence beyond London 2012” (UK Sport, 2012: 36). The most recent programme to be introduced is known as the World Class Coaching Elite Programme. UK Sport’s stated vision for the programme is “for coaches in British high-performance sport to be the best in the world” (UK Sport, 2013a: 13). Interviewee P, a senior official from national sports organisation P, said that the programme gave UK Sport the opportunity to “blue print what a World Class coach really looks like and that will help further learning through the system” (Interview P, 06/03/2013).
A criticism of the focus on high quality support personnel in British sport has been the number of non-British people appointed to senior positions and the high salaries that have been paid to these professionals. Hubbard (2011) highlighted that, ahead of the London Olympic Games, there were 52 foreign coaches in senior positions within the British Olympic sports NGBs and only three sports – boxing, hockey and shooting – were set to have all-British coaching teams at the Games. Interviewee P responded to this criticism and said “this is an international business: you’re competing against the best in the world so you need to recruit and retain the best in the world” (Interview P, 06/03/2013). There was a concern that after the London 2012 Games there would be an exodus of quality personnel from the British system but that does not appear to have been the case, suggesting that this change to the elite sport landscape may be longer term, if not permanent, rather than a temporary response to the priorities for London 2012.

The overall focus on the quality of technical personnel for supporting high performance sport, and in particular the establishment of EIS, indicates an important change to the high performance sports landscape. Although the EIS has existed since 2001, its importance within the system has increased as its position has been more clearly defined and the positive impact of its services demonstrated in high performance sport, thus indicating what Hall (1986) would describe as first order change – a change to the intensity of a policy instrument.

8.3 Funding

Interviewees acknowledged the funding of high performance sport from the National Lottery as the most important factor in changing the landscape of high performance sport and changing the fortunes of the British teams at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Interviewee B, a senior official from an Olympic NGB (organisation O2), stated that the money invested in the sport is “probably our single biggest performance advantage” (Interview B, 01/03/2012), thus indicating how important funding is for high performance sport. As well as the amount of money that has been invested, the continuity of the funding available has been important within the landscape and it has allowed long-term changes to become embedded. Interviewee S, a senior official from a non-government national sports organisation, highlighted
“sustained resource was available” and this led to the creation of “a landscape that suggests that systematic change can be made” (Interview S, 03/06/2013).

The overall funding for the World Class Performance programme has increased significantly for both Olympic and Paralympic sports since its inception. The amounts for the Sydney and Athens Olympiads only relate to the top level of WCPP, known as ‘Podium’, as the lower two levels, ‘Talent’ and ‘Development’ were funded at home country level but, as noted previously, UK Sport took full control of funding and programming for all levels of the WCPP from 2006. The increase in funding for Paralympic sport in particular is substantial – seven times the amount of money is available for Rio 2016 compared with Sydney 2000 and the amount has more than doubled since the change to the funding structure ahead of Beijing 2008.

Table 8.1 – Funding for Olympic and Paralympic sport WCPP 2000-2016
(current prices, correct at 04/02/2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olympic</td>
<td>£58,900,000</td>
<td>£70,000,000</td>
<td>£235,103,000</td>
<td>£264,143,753</td>
<td>£273,571,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paralympic</td>
<td>£10,075,602</td>
<td>£14,821,355</td>
<td>£29,545,872</td>
<td>£49,254,386</td>
<td>£71,247,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UK Sport website

The two key policy decisions in 2006 – to move full responsibility for the WCPP from Sport England to UK Sport and to give WCPP funding to all Olympic sports with which UK Sport worked – partly explain the increase of funding from the Beijing Olympiad onwards but the stated policy aim of achieving 4th place in the Olympics medal table and 2nd in the Paralympics (DCMS, 2008; UK Sport, 2012a) also meant that more money was needed. The funding amounts for each sport are shown in Tables 8.2 (Olympic sports) and 8.3 (Paralympic sports).

While the distribution of WCPP funding exhibits considerable continuity, there were cases of sports that received funding for the first time in 2006 in order to prepare for London 2012 and have been able to retain funding as well as sports that have received significant increases in funding by demonstrating increased success. Fencing did not receive any funding in the Sydney and Athens funding cycles but was part of the WCPP from 2006 and therefore received funding for Beijing 2008 and London 2012 and has been able to retain funding for Rio 2016 and boxing has seen

---

its funding increase substantially from £5,005,000 for 2008, to £9,551,400 for 2012 and then increased further to £13,764,439 for 2016 (UK Sport41). There was a clear shift in the government’s policy objectives in the period 2006 to 2012 when more sports received funding to ensure that they could produce teams for the London 2012 Games but the majority of sports reverted back to their previous position of having no funding after London 2012 so while this evidence refutes the notion of historical contingency this policy decision was a significant but temporary change in the landscape.

Whilst funding to both Olympic and Paralympic programmes has increased, some sports have seen a reduction in funding for preparations for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. All support has ceased for basketball, handball, table tennis, synchronised swimming, table tennis, volleyball and water polo in the Olympic programme and goalball, sitting volleyball and wheelchair fencing in the Paralympic programme. Basketball, synchronised swimming, volleyball, water polo, goalball and wheelchair fencing had initially been allocated funding after London 2012 but this support was removed when the funding was reviewed in early 2014. This situation once again raised the question of the validity of the No Compromise philosophy, with the media arguing that medals should not be the only consideration for sports to receive funding (for example, Walsh, 2014), which could indicate a shift in the national mood, a few element in Kingdon's (1995) political stream.

Table 8.2 - Funding amounts for Olympic sports for the London and Rio funding cycles (current prices, correct at 04/02/2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>2012 London</th>
<th>2016 Rio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archery</td>
<td>£4,408,000</td>
<td>£2,952,237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>£25,148,000</td>
<td>£26,824,206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badminton</td>
<td>£7,434,900</td>
<td>£5,913,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>£8,599,000</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boxing (Amateur)</td>
<td>£9,551,400</td>
<td>£13,764,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canoeing</td>
<td>£16,176,700</td>
<td>£20,043,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td>£26,032,000</td>
<td>£30,565,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diving</td>
<td>£6,535,700</td>
<td>£7,467,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equestrian</td>
<td>£13,395,100</td>
<td>£17,992,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing</td>
<td>£2,529,335</td>
<td>£3,976,819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>£10,770,600</td>
<td>£14,615,428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handball</td>
<td>£2,924,721</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>£15,013,200</td>
<td>£16,141,393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judo</td>
<td>£7,498,000</td>
<td>£7,366,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Pentathlon</td>
<td>£6,288,800</td>
<td>£6,972,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowing</td>
<td>£27,287,600</td>
<td>£32,622,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>£22,942,700</td>
<td>£25,504,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shooting</td>
<td>£2,461,866</td>
<td>£3,190,854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>£25,144,600</td>
<td>£20,795,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synchronised Swimming</td>
<td>£3,398,300</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table Tennis</td>
<td>£1,213,848</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taekwondo</td>
<td>£4,833,600</td>
<td>£8,053,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triathlon</td>
<td>£5,291,300</td>
<td>£7,457,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>£3,536,077</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Polo</td>
<td>£2,928,039</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weightlifting</td>
<td>£1,365,157</td>
<td>£1,350,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrestling</td>
<td>£1,435,210</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£264,143,753</strong></td>
<td><strong>£273,571,679</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UK Sport website (www.uksport.gov.uk)
Table 8.3 - Funding amounts for Paralympic sports for the London and Rio cycles
(current prices, correct at 04/02/2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>2012 London</th>
<th>2016 Rio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boccia</td>
<td>£2,333,300</td>
<td>£3,613,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Archery</td>
<td>£2,147,700</td>
<td>£2,063,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Athletics</td>
<td>£6,730,000</td>
<td>£10,837,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Sailing</td>
<td>£1,748,900</td>
<td>£3,616,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Shooting</td>
<td>£2,085,000</td>
<td>£3,333,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Swimming</td>
<td>£10,468,750</td>
<td>£11,756,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Table Tennis</td>
<td>£1,699,400</td>
<td>£3,006,850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football 5-a-side</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalball</td>
<td>£513,453</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judo (Visually Impaired)</td>
<td>£1,294,400</td>
<td>£2,019,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para canoe</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£3,048,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para-Cycling</td>
<td>£4,198,000</td>
<td>£6,833,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para-Equestrian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressage</td>
<td>£3,605,500</td>
<td>£3,782,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para-Rowing</td>
<td>£2,332,300</td>
<td>£3,834,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para-Triathlon</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£2,328,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerlifting</td>
<td>£1,092,700</td>
<td>£841,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting Volleyball</td>
<td>£786,961</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair Basketball</td>
<td>£4,493,930</td>
<td>£5,379,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair Fencing</td>
<td>£552,892</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair Rugby</td>
<td>£2,361,600</td>
<td>£3,026,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair Tennis</td>
<td>£809,600</td>
<td>£1,925,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£49,254,386</strong></td>
<td><strong>£71,247,756</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UK Sport website (www.uksport.gov.uk)

The proportion of Exchequer and National Lottery funding to UK Sport has gradually changed over time. Table 8.4 shows the amounts from each source and Table 8.1 indicates how the amounts have changed between the previous funding cycle (2009-2013) and the current cycle (2013-2017) with the National Lottery now being a much more significant income stream, increasing from £261million to £350million while the income from the Exchequer has decreased from £240million to £160million. The fact that the government has adjusted funding to high performance sport to rely more on the National Lottery could indicate that the funding is being protected from potential government financial changes, as the future of the economy remains somewhat uncertain. It also protects high performance sport from questions about how appropriate it is for taxpayers’ money to be spent on sport instead of public services that benefit a greater number of people.
Table 8.4 - Funding to UK Sport from Exchequer and National Lottery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009/10</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exchequer</td>
<td>£59.65m</td>
<td>£55.36m</td>
<td>£60.651m</td>
<td>£65.966m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Lottery</td>
<td>£56.57m</td>
<td>£59.33m</td>
<td>£70.045m</td>
<td>£88.743m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 8.5 UK Sport income sources 2009-2013 and 2013-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009-2013</th>
<th>2013-2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Lottery</td>
<td>£261m</td>
<td>£350m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchequer</td>
<td>£240m</td>
<td>£160m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team 2012</td>
<td>£7m</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£2m*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Based on current projections

Source: UK Sport (2012a: 16) and UK Sport (2014: 16)

The plan in 2006 was for government to contribute £200m of the funding needed for London 2012 preparations with a further £100m to be secured through commercial input. However, as UK Sport stated, this plan was hampered by the global credit crunch and it became difficult to raise funds. A combination of funding cuts to many sports and further support from government meant that the funding shortage reduced to £50m and UK Sport, in partnership with the BOA, the BPA and LOCOG, set up Team 2012 in 2009 to try to raise the additional funds (UK Sport, 2012a). Interviewee W was critical of the government on this point because there was little done by DCMS to begin to raise the funds before the credit crunch hit: “either because of politics or economic consequences or whatever, it meant that the deal that was struck was not honoured and wasn’t properly underwritten” (Interview W, 20/11/2013). UK Sport stated, “With the ‘optimal’ funding budget no longer available, UK Sport had to consider an approach that would continue to maximise medal delivery ” (UK Sport, 2012a: 12) and the result was a decrease in budgets for eight Olympic sports and four Paralympic sports (UK Sport42). Interviewee W expressed that this caused problems with the NGBs and said that the cuts were made “at huge political cost in terms of relationships within sport” (Interview W, 20/11/2013).

Although UK Sport was affected by funding cuts in 2009, funding to high performance sport saw little reduction following the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and was not affected by the 2013 CSR. As the government spending cycles do not synchronise with Olympic cycles a good deal of negotiation needs to

---

be done to ensure funds are secured beyond the regular government spending cycles or sports would only have funding secured for part of the Olympic cycle. It could be argued that this lack of synchronisation benefits sport as it would be potentially difficult for a government to reduce funding one year before the Olympic Games.

In addition to the WCPP funded through UK Sport, Sport England supports senior elite programmes for three further sports: squash and racketball, netball and women’s rugby union. All three of these sports feature in the Commonwealth Games (the rugby sevens format is used for the Commonwealth Games) so additional funding supports the development of England squads. The funding amounts for these sports for the period 2013-2017 are shown in table 8.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Funding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>£5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby Union (women)</td>
<td>£750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash and racketball</td>
<td>£2,300,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sport England website

Commercial funding

The popularity of Olympic and Paralympic sport has led to increased commercial interest, which has brought more funding in to the sports. This funding is sometimes targeted at a sport, for example the association between Sky and British Cycling and between British Athletics and Sainsburys, and other times at an individual athlete. For example, Olympic champion Jessica Ennis’s official website lists her sponsors as Adidas, PruHealth, BP, Sky Sports Living for Sport, Santander, Powerade and Omega. However, interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, noted that the majority of Olympic and Paralympic sports still rely on public funding as their main source of income but complement this with support in the form of specialist equipment, for example boats for rowing. As part of the Rio 2016 Investment Principles document, UK Sport issued an instruction for NGBs to seek out additional funding from commercial activity, sponsorship or diverting money from clubs or NGBs.

---

44 http://www.jessicaennis.net/sponsors.html accessed 23/06/2014
membership fees to supplement the public funding for their high performance programmes (UK Sport\textsuperscript{45}, principle 8). The encouragement of NGBs to diversify their funding streams and not be too reliant on public funding again indicates a drive for a more business-like approach to managing and delivering high performance sport, which links to the aims of the modernisation agenda. However, if the NGBs are less reliant on public funding there could be a risk of loss of leverage by UK Sport and, as noted in chapter 5, interviewee E, a senior officer from an Olympic NGB (organisation O4), highlighted that there is tension between the public funders and the drive for commercial funding of NGBs.

Interviewee R was somewhat sceptical of investment in elite sport via sponsorship of an individual athlete as it does not always add value to the athlete’s performance and sometimes the commercial company uses the athlete’s name to improve their brand by stating that they funded the athlete’s success, often ignoring the significance of public funding. However, the same interviewee conceded, “any investment in sport has got to be seen as a positive thing – it’s just making sure it’s not exploiting the athlete rather than complementing and supporting the athlete” (Interview R, 02/05/2013). There have been criticisms of athletes needing to spend excessive amounts of time to fulfil their obligations to their commercial and media partners. Diver Tom Daley was subject to criticism by his sport’s performance director, Alexei Evangulov, for spending too much time away from his training, which Evangulov speculated could impact on his chances of winning gold at the Olympics (Hart, 2012).

Commercial funding of non-Olympic sports also draws criticism. In the case of football, there is speculation that the wealth and power of the Premier League and its member clubs to draw in players from overseas is damaging the England national team. Interviewee J, a senior official from non-Olympic sports organisation (organisation NO5), stated that in football the Premier League clubs have the power to shape policy in the national game and stated that smaller sports, giving the example of netball which is growing its commercial base but is still small compared with football, have greater control over the progress of the national squad than the Football Association currently has over the England football team. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, echoed this concern and stated that the huge sums of money involved in the Premier League is taking football further in a business direction rather than a sport direction: “if your number one objective in this country is

\textsuperscript{45} \url{http://www.uksport.gov.uk/docLib/InvestmentPrinciplesRio.pdf} accessed 23/06/2014
to produce a world cup winning England team, I would argue that the commercial investment sometimes doesn’t support that!” (Interview R, 02/05/2013).

When asked to speculate on the potential for funding continuing at current levels after the next Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio, interviewees pointed to a number of macro-, meso- and micro-level changes that could impact upon the landscape. Interviewee P, a senior official from a government-funded national sports organisation, stated that the biggest challenge would be demonstrating the success of the British team, and therefore the success of government investment, and its relevance to the UK when the Games are hosted overseas: “that’s the challenge – how do we make sure the nation touches and feels the impact of success and the inspiration of success really works” (Interview P, 06/03/2013). Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, speculated that the following factors could influence the situation: “the state of the economy, which government is in power, whether the results in Rio are strong and whether the leadership of UK Sport can continue to articulate the importance of this area of investment” (Interview R, 02/05/2013). Interviewee W highlighted three potential risks to the levels of investment in elite sport: firstly political boredom – i.e.: senior politicians no longer find high performance sport of interest, which could be caused by a decline in results. Secondly a greater degree of scrutiny of the funding and what it buys so even though funding to high performance sport is low in relation to overall government spending across all policy areas, it is a large amount of money spent on a small number of people. The interviewee termed this ‘political noise’. Thirdly, the interviewee speculated that loss of confidence in the high performance sport sector caused by “a particular, catastrophic event”, such as the discovery of systematic doping within an Olympic sport, could impact on government support (Interview W, 20/11/2013).

8.4 Political Salience

As outlined in previous chapters, the political saliency of elite sport emerged in the mid 1990s during John Major’s government and has remained high ever since. The focus has refined somewhat over time and the government has great involvement in the resourcing of Olympic sport as well as a keen interest in high profile, non-Olympic sports such as football, cricket and rugby. A key focal point for DCMS’s policies for sport is supporting athletes to be successful at the Olympic and Paralympic Games.
In terms of the Coalition government’s interest in elite sport, the priorities of international success and the hosting of major events have remained and the hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 guided the government’s sport policy when it came into existence in 2010. The importance of elite sport is salient to the highest level of government: Jeffreys (2012: 261) described the Prime Minister, David Cameron, as being “acutely aware of the potential benefits, economic and political, of being associated with global sporting spectacles especially those taking place on home shores.” The Prime Minister, as well as other senior government officials and the Royal Family, were visible during the Games as they spectated alongside the public and interacted with the media.

Writing before the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, McDonald (2011: 383) stated that continued political and financial support for elite sport would “depend on the political capital that can be gained from the performance of UK athletes at the Olympic Games and the level of international prestige that can be garnered from hosting the Games.” The government’s interest in Olympic success and keenness to continue to support the system was a great opportunity for the future of the system to be secured. Interviewee R, a senior figure in British sport, commented that funding for the Rio cycle was secured “sitting in the stands in London” (Interview R, 02/05/2013) and a formal announcement was made by the Prime Minister that funding would be sustained to Rio on the final day of the 2012 Olympic Games (Kelso, 2012). This decision by the government, and the fact that the announcement was made by the Prime Minister, rather than the Secretary of State for Culture or the Minister for Sport, indicates the strength of the national mood in support of sport and the institutionalised value of elite sport success. The Prime Minister’s announcement was then supported by a statement by the Minister for Sport of ten key points for the legacy of the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, as noted in chapter five.

The Labour government was very explicit about its aims for success at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in the document Playing to Win: A New Era for Sport and stated that the goal was “4th in 2012 Olympics and 2nd in Paralympics medal table and sustaining that to 2016” (DCMS, 2008a: 4). Neither the Conservative party’s pre-election plans for sport set out in their document Extending Opportunities: A Conservative Policy Paper on Sport (Conservative Party, 2009), nor the Coalition government’s The Coalition: our programme for government document (Cabinet Office, 2010) specifically mentioned the funding or any other support of high
performance sport programmes, instead focusing on other parts of the high performance sport landscape such as hosting of major events and anti-doping. However, in the 2010 document *Plans for the Legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*, the government gave more explicit support for the high performance sport system and stated that it would continue to fund UK Sport’s preparations for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Furthermore, it was stated that the government: “will ensure that UK Sport’s income for the start of the Rio 2016 Games cycle is the same as at present, and will enable us to maintain a world class high performance system in the UK” (DCMS, 2010: 5).

The relative lack of change in the political salience of elite sport is evident through the government’s publications – the Coalition government’s aspirations remained the same as those of the Labour government with no indication of an intention to change the approach to preparation. One possible explanation for this continuity is that following increasingly positive results at the 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games, elite sport was, in the words of interviewee L, a representative from the government, “not viewed as a problem that government needs to fix” (Interview L, 06/11/2012).

Arguably the visibility of senior politicians, not least the Prime Minister, during the Games meant that it would have been difficult for the government to retreat from support for high performance sport having invested so much in to achieving political favour through the support of the Games. Furthermore, as indicated in the introduction to this chapter, more countries are competing in Olympic sport and more public resource is being dedicated to the development of high performance sport across the world thus indicating an international mood in favour of this policy approach so it would be difficult for the British government to deviate from this trend.

### 8.5 Conclusion

With reference to Sydow et al’s (2005) model of the formation of path dependency, 2006 was arguably a critical juncture that led to path formation whereby policy options were significantly constrained although alternative options still remained for policymakers as UK Sport’s position and the broad policy direction was dependent on the achievement of targets for high performance sport. Following the success of the British team at London 2012, the policy path became locked as UK Sport and the organisations and programmes that it funded had been shown to be successful.
Ongoing support post-2012 for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games further reinforced the assertion that path dependency has been established. The No Compromise approach is an important policy instrument within the system and it has become deeply institutionalised, both in terms of providing a framework for decision-making and policy implementation as well as being part of how elite sport is valued. There has not been a strong enough opposition lobby, change in public mood or a viable alternative to the approach, which has reinforced the establishment of the path dependency.

The long-term impact of the Labour government’s modernisation agenda is still evident in working practices today. UK Sport’s No Compromise model and investment principles make specific reference to how NGBs are governed. The modernising of NGBs that was ordered and resourced by UK Sport, including the establishment of ‘GB’ NGBs to receive funding for sports’ elite programmes, and the potential sanctions that NGBs could face if they did not comply with specific standards, meant that UK Sport had, and continues to have, significant power and has created self-governing bodies within the elite sport policy landscape largely according to its own design principles.

The main changes in the landscape occurred as the government and the sports organisations prepared for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London, with adjustments to organisational arrangements – a second order change - and a significant increase in funding - a first order change. Some sports would argue that change has been significant as in a period of 6 years they have gone from zero investment to receiving millions of pounds to prepare for 2012 and then back to receiving nothing. However, the system has remained relatively stable as a whole.

Interviewee W offered three reasons for the potential decline in the stability of the current policy objectives around elite sport. The first reason for possible policy changes that interviewee W cited was political boredom. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, has been actively engaged with high performance sport, especially with reference to the hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the success of the British teams at those Games. The keen interest in hosting major and mega events in the UK has been an important element in the continuity of engagement of politicians. The period 2010-2019 has been termed a ‘golden decade of sport’ during which, in addition to the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Commonwealth Games, IRB World Cup and IAAF World Championships are all to be
hosted in the UK. With so many large-scale events still ahead, it is unlikely that political support will be withdrawn or that the drive for British champions will diminish.

The second reason that might lead to policy change in elite sport cited by interviewee W was “political noise”, meaning disquiet about the amount of public money allocated to high performance sport and the way in which it is invested. As noted above, there have been some challenges to the way in which funding was invested in high performance sport, specifically in that some NGBs appealed their post-2012 funding cuts and there were recommendations by the House of Lords to review the No Compromise model in order to better support those sports whose high performance programmes are less well developed (House of Lords, 2013). However these arguments focus on the distribution of funds for high performance sport; they are not arguments for the reduction or cessation of political support. There was a brief discussion of this issue in a Committee of Public Accounts evidence session in 2006. The chairman of the Committee questioned Liz Nicholl, then the Director of Performance at UK Sport, about the value of winning medals compared with provision of public sports facilities: “What is in winning medals for the general public apart from prestige? Why are we not spending more of this money on local swimming pools, for instance?” (House of Commons, 2006: Ev 2). Nicholl replied that the inspirational effect, also known as the ‘trickle down effect’, of British success justified the investment, a response that was accepted by the chairman and the session continued without dwelling on the point.

Despite these questions arising, there has been little evidence of a campaign against funding of elite sport or even a government debate on the subject; it has merely arisen as a topic of discussion from time to time and the government have deflected any criticism by citing the unarguable success of the approach in improving results for the British teams at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The fact that this answer was accepted without any supporting evidence indicates the predisposition of most MPs to accept the popular myths about the benefits of elite sport, which resonates with Coalter’s (2007) notion of the mythopoeic nature of sport and the prevalence of ideas and values informing decisions (Fischer, 2003). In addition, the issue of political noise has arguably been quietened by the instruction to all NGBs that their funded athletes must give up five days per year to fulfil an ambassadorial role by doing activities such as coaching or school visits (Cabinet Office, 2013). This supports the government’s policy to drive up participation through inspiring people
and making use of the ‘trickle down effect’, although this notion has no substantial evidence of successfully increasing participation.

The third reason that might result in change to the government’s policy of support for high performance sport offered by interviewee W was a catastrophic event within the system such as the discovery of systematic drug use. Overall sport in the UK is tightly regulated, both by UK Sport, the government and other specialist agencies. With specific reference to doping in sport, UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) is very active in promoting clean sport and regular testing of athletes with strict enforcement of programmes such as the whereabouts programme. The Chief Executive of UKAD, Andy Parkinson, works very closely with the World Anti Doping Agency (WADA), including being invited to be the lead Independent Observer at the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014 (UKAD, 2013) and the UK is generally looked upon very favourably with regards to anti-doping so it seems unlikely that any large-scale doping operations exist within high performance sport in the UK.

Since the changes that occurred in the 1990s, when the government significantly increased its interest in and support for elite level sport, the system has remained relatively stable. The stability has come about due to the institutionalisation of organisational structures and associated interests, the setting of standards including policy instruments such as the No Compromise model, and processes of accountability, most of which was brought about due to the modernisation agenda. The hosting of London 2012 seems to have greater impact on the elite sport landscape than the macro-level factors of the global economic crisis and subsequent recession in the UK and the change of government in 2010. London 2012 was an opportunity to speed-up the process of developing high performance sport and the increase in resources to support this were justified by government. London 2012 has continued to impact upon policy even after the Games as the government has stated its aspiration to sustain or improve upon the performance of the British Olympic and Paralympic teams in 2012 at the next Games in Rio in 2016. Overall it appears that there is currently no willingness by the government or pressure on it to alter the continued level of support, both in terms of political saliency and funding, of elite sport in the UK. The value of high performance success is ingrained in the landscape and the processes and structures of funding and accountability are deeply institutionalised. While the British Olympic and Paralympic teams continue to be successful, and do so cleanly, few questions are raised about the rationale for this
support and the amount of money involved, it would appear that the path dependency is likely to continue.
Chapter 9 – Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the key research findings from the case studies and analyses the key factors in explaining stability in the policy landscape. There will also be a discussion of the value of the theoretical frameworks used for the data collection and analysis. Finally there will be an evaluation of the research process.

There have been significant, at times arguably radical, changes to policy across government since 2010 due to the combined factors of the recession, and therefore a need to reduce public spending, and a significant shift in political ideology after the change from a Labour government to a Conservative-led coalition government. In the context of these macro-level changes, why has the policy landscape of elite sport enjoyed a period of relative stability? The current government is committed to marketization, which has included moves to privatise elements of health and education, yet there remains a centralist domination of funding and political leadership of elite sport.

One of the key challenges of the research was to operationalise the concepts of stability and change as assessments of policy change can be subjective and therefore difficult to identify and measure. Hall’s (1986) typology was a very useful framework for examining these concepts as it distinguishes between change at three levels: change to the intensity of a policy instrument, change to the range of policy instruments deployed and change to the policy objectives. While Hall’s typology is valuable, there still remains the problem of distinguishing between incremental and quantum change on each of the three levels so stability and change need to be assessed in both relative and absolute terms with relative measures involving, for example, comparisons between changes within each of Hall’s three orders of change.

Overall the evidence presented in this thesis indicates that there has been significant stability in the elite sport policy landscape since the late 1990s. This conclusion does not, however, suggest that change has been absent from the elite sport policy landscape. Indeed, as was clear from chapters 5-8 there has been substantial change but this has generally been confined to the first- and second-orders of change of Hall’s typology. The three key components of the landscape that were
identified were: organisations, programmes and partnerships; funding; and political salience. After many years of change and uncertainty within the structure of elite sport, the establishment of UK Sport as a government agency with specific responsibility for elite sport in 1997 was a key turning point, which was further consolidated by the decision in 2006 that UK Sport should take full responsibility for the World Class Performance Programme (WCPP) having previously shared this responsibility with Sport England. The establishment and refining of programmes to support elite sport, including the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS), the various levels of WCPP, talent transfer programmes and the development of the English Institute of Sport have all contributed to the success, and arguably the stability, of elite sport policy objectives. The funding of elite sport changed dramatically in the late 1990s, and along with it the capacity of government to influence policy objectives, with the introduction of the National Lottery. Funding was then significantly increased following the successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games in London and the government’s subsequent decisions to aim for fourth place in the Olympic medals table and then to achieve the same number or more medals at the next Games in Rio. The funding has remained stable despite the financial crisis that began in 2008 and subsequent deep cuts to public spending across government. Similarly, the political salience of elite sport has remained high despite the change in government in 2010.

9.2 Evaluation of the research process

This research was funded by a group of departments within Loughborough University that were interested in the impact of the turbulent political environment and potential changes within the elite sport policy landscape. One of the biggest challenges of this research was that the original research question focused on managing turbulence although the early phase of the research soon indicated the relative stability of the landscape was the characteristic that required explanation. As noted in the previous section, change in policy is often easier to identify and also there is more academic literature and previous research that focuses on analysing and explaining change rather than stability.

The researcher experienced few issues in the document analysis process within the research. There were no problems with regards to accessing the documents that were identified. The majority were available through public websites and the few that
were not readily available were obtained via membership of the website www.sportdevelopment.info or from the researcher’s supervisor. One challenge that the researcher faced was changes to organisations’ approaches to producing and storing their documents. For example, UK Sport has changed its process of publishing annual reports and accounts: the latter the organisation must do by law but there is a lack of consistency in the publication of reports, especially since 2010 when NDPBs such as UK Sport were asked to reduce their spending on non-essential outputs in the wake of the financial crisis so glossy annual reports ceased to be produced. Furthermore, examining reports before the Sports Council was split into England and GB councils meant there was a lack of consistency but the documents produced pre-1997 were accessible and information was presented clearly.

The sample of interviewees is an important point for reflection in this research. The sample consisted of ten interviewees from ten different organisations across the spectrum of Olympic and non-Olympic sports, commercially successful and public-dependent and those that could be considered successful in terms of participation numbers and/or success on the international stage, and a further ten interviewees from organisations with a cross-sport responsibility at the national level. The timings of the interviews may have altered responses slightly if the interviewees’ organisations had experienced changes to their income from UK Sport as they may have viewed the funder differently. The sample was also sound for the cross-sport organisations that were involved as their roles are generally fixed within the landscape and therefore the group of organisations was important to consider in this research. The interviews generated rich data that allowed the researcher to fully understand the dynamics of the elite sport policy landscape including challenges that organisations or groups of organisations faced. The size and quality of the sample contributed to the reliability and the validity of the research.

The research itself was funded by Loughborough University so the objectives of the university as the commissioner of the research had to be considered when selecting the sample. Certain sports are of particular interest to the university in terms of existing relationships between the institution and NGBs and potential future relationships that may be sought so these sports were considered in the sample. The relationship between the university and some of the NGBs was of benefit to the researcher as it meant that access to senior officials in those NGBs was straightforward, as will be noted below, but there could have been biased responses
from interviewees as they may have felt that there were certain things they should or should not say to a researcher from the university. However, there did not seem to be any significant or problematic difference in responses from interviewees on this basis.

Two of the key concerns of using elite interviewing as a data collection method cited in chapter 4 were, firstly, access to subjects and, secondly, the power relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, especially the potential for the interviewee to attempt to dominate the interview. In terms of access, there were no significant problems with contacting subjects due to supportive contacts within the university and the majority of subjects that were contacted agreed to be interviewed. There was one case when the researcher was refused access to an interviewee, the CEO of a national sports organisation, by a gatekeeper; in this case a personal assistant. The personal assistant had taken receipt of the letter from the researcher and decided that the CEO was not an appropriate interviewee and suggested that the researcher contact a head of department within the organisation. The researcher spoke with the personal assistant on the phone to try to get an appointment to see the CEO but was refused. The interview went ahead with the head of department and garnered some rich data as the interviewee had a wealth of knowledge and experience and was generous with his time but his lack of strategic oversight meant that some elements of decision-making and dynamics within the landscape could not be explored fully. Some interviewees limited the time available for the meeting and others required some chasing in terms of finding a suitable date, including one interviewee who changed the arrangements twice. In one case, the senior official who had corresponded with the researcher and agreed to be interviewed forgot the appointment and another member of his department, who was not as senior, was interviewed instead.

In terms of the researcher’s impact on the interviews and the power relationships that can exist between interviewer and interviewee, especially in the case of elite interviews, there were few issues of note. One interviewee was quite condescending and seemed to see their role in the situation as advisor so he asked the interviewer questions such as “what are your research objectives?” and “why are you doing a PhD?” and gave his opinion on the responses rather than responding to the researcher’s questions. There were useful data drawn from this interview but the interviewee often gave brief responses and kept the interview short so it was not as rich as other interviews. Another interviewee was aware of the researcher’s
background in working for UK Sport and therefore occasionally used the word “you” to refer to the organisation so considered the researcher to still be part of that organisation but this did not seem to prejudice the interviewee against the researcher. The researcher was not covert about her former role and the interviewees that were aware of the situation made little reference to it and did not seem to be prejudiced as a result: indeed one interviewee was very interested in the researcher’s former role and wanted to discuss this informally at length and an affable rapport developed as a result. Overall the researcher’s former role was a benefit to the research because of existing operational knowledge of the organisations in the landscape. In Chapter 4 it was speculated that the fact that the researcher is young and female could influence the interviewees attitudes but this was not found to be problematic. The majority of interviewees (17 out of 20) were male but the researcher did not perceive gender, or indeed age, as being problematic during the interviews.

A further factor that the researcher had to consider when conducting the interviews was the fact that some interviewees knew the researcher due to her previous employment. The experience of interviewing someone that the researcher knows will inevitably give a different experience to interviewing someone that the researcher is meeting for the first time. As these interviewees knew about researcher’s previous experience they assumed that the researcher already had certain knowledge and at times the researcher had to ask the interviewees to return to certain points for them to explain their personal position or that of their organisation so that there was recorded data for the researcher to use. The researcher expected that this set of interviews might be more relaxed than the other interviews and that was the case with one exception where the interviewee was more reserved in their responses, possibly due to the awareness that the researcher knew a lot about the organisation’s operations.

In some of the interviews the researcher found that the interviewees gave answers that could be described as ‘politically correct’: the responses were in line with the organisation’s official position and revealed little more information than could be gleaned from the organisation’s publications or website. There are two possible reasons for this that the researcher can identify. Firstly, it may be that the interviewee wanted to protect their organisation, or indeed their self, despite assurances of anonymity given by the researcher. A second reason could be that the interviewee felt unsure about what they should or should not reveal or did not have knowledge of
specific details of the organisation. This was particularly noticeable when the researcher interviewed individuals in positions such as department head rather than chief executive – although they held senior positions, they were not the head of the organisation. This relates to one of the sampling concerns raised in Chapter 4 regarding selection of interviewees with appropriate knowledge for the interview but in two specific cases the researcher could not access the senior official that would have been the ideal interviewee.

Overall, the researcher would change little about the research process. The majority of interviewees were engaged in the research process and the topic and willing to share their knowledge and experiences, therefore it was possible to gather rich data from these interviews. The researcher is aware of the factors that led to accessing the sample of interviewees and acknowledges the assistance of the supervisor and the Sport Development Centre senior staff in providing important contacts and referrals for accessing the interviewees.

### 9.3 Summary of key findings

Table 9.1 indicates the three orders of change described by Hall (1986) in each of the three case studies presented in this thesis.
Table 9.1 – Three levels of change within the three case studies (2005 – 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youth talent search and development</th>
<th>Nurturing and transferring talent</th>
<th>Sustaining world class athletes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First order</strong></td>
<td>- Reduction in funding via Department of Education</td>
<td>- More funding to support programmes including ringfenced funding for Sport England</td>
<td>- Increase in funding from 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second order</strong></td>
<td>- Introduction of the England Talent Pathway</td>
<td>- Introduction of systematic talent transfer programmes</td>
<td>- Government decision to fund a larger group of sports for London 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduction of the School Games</td>
<td>- Transfer of full responsibility for WCPP to UK Sport in 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Removal of SSPs and associated programmes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Third order</strong></td>
<td>- Increased prioritisation of competitive sport in schools</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Increased ambition in terms of medal success at the Olympic/Paralympic Games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Using Hall’s (1986) typology of change

There is not single explanation for the level of relative stability identified in this research. Rather it is argued that stability is the outcome of a combination of factors. The first factor in explaining stability in the elite sport policy landscape, which is described in this research as consisting of organisations, funding and political salience, was the absence of an alternative, critical lobby. In the past there have been tensions between the policy objectives of increasing participation levels in sport and achieving international success. However, the separation and clarification of roles and responsibilities for the two key non-departmental public bodies, UK Sport and Sport England, and the fact that both have received substantial resources to pursue their respective policy objectives have lessened this tension and consequently there have not been conditions under which a lobby critical of the emphasis on elite success might emerge and strengthen. Successive recent governments have focused their attention for elite sport policy on Olympic and Paralympic sports, a decision that, again, has not been subject to any significant opposition because sports that fall outside of this category are either able to cope financially or do not have a strong enough voice in the landscape to object. For example, cricket and football have their own significant resources in addition to their
government funding and have regular access to the government whereas NGBs such as England Netball, although they may be successful in their pursuit of excellence and increasing participation, are not funded by UK Sport and have less direct and frequent access to decision makers. The approach of allocating funding using the *No Compromise* model has also largely gone unchallenged and has become institutionalised within the sector. Objections to the approach started to emerge in 2013 following the announcement of funding for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games but criticism has generally been muted.

There is also an element of relative marginalisation that works to the benefit of elite sport policy. Although governments have had a clear set of policy objectives for elite sport, the objectives themselves and the means of achieving them have rarely generated sufficient controversy to force high level (Parliamentary or Cabinet) debate. The lack of a lobby against elite sport policy reinforces the government’s position of not seeing elite sport as a policy issue that needs regular debate or confirmation on the agenda of government. It can therefore be concluded that the objective of elite sport success has become institutionalised in terms of how it is valued by government.

A second factor in explaining stability in the elite sport landscape is the strong leadership in the sector, especially by UK Sport. UK Sport has held an important role in maintaining the equilibrium in the landscape for two reasons: the clarity and continuity of the organisation’s core objectives and its leadership in the elite sport sector. The clarity and continuity of purpose has in turn been facilitated by the stability of the government’s objectives for elite sport but the way in which UK Sport has translated the government’s policy direction into an operational environment working with NGBs has been crucial. Interviewees from Olympic NGBs noted the difference in their working relationships with UK Sport compared with Sport England, with the latter organisation’s objectives being far less consistent and therefore more difficult to operationalise.

UK Sport has been well positioned, largely due to its success in meeting policy targets set by DCMS, to negotiate with government and to articulate the need for investment of public funds, which was particularly evident when UK Sport secured additional funding to support sports in their preparations for London 2012 after the bid was won. Many interviewees cited Sue Campbell, the former Chair of UK Sport, as being a key leader in the landscape: Campbell held a role that Kingdon (1995)
would term a ‘policy entrepreneur’. The role of UK Sport has also been reinforced by the general policy of modernisation, which was introduced by the Labour government and which has had a significant and long-term impact on the development of the elite sport system and the development of contractual relationships between UK Sport and the NGBs.

Key facets of modernisation have become deeply embedded in the elite sport system in the UK, particularly the restructuring of NGBs to have UK-level organisations responsible for elite sport and the pressure to adopt competency-based boards and commercial sector governance structures, which are now key features of the system. The contractual relationships and the importance of accountability, including threats of financial sanctions if standards are not met, have contributed to the stability of the structures for elite sport. The focus on governance and establishing a business-like approach was a significant part of the modernisation of elite sport under the Labour government but this has remained stable partly because the system is, for most NGBs, working well and has been well-resourced and therefore there is little reason to change it, but also because it is an approach that is compatible with and reflects Conservative government values.

The third factor for explaining stability in the elite sport policy landscape was London’s successful bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which was a factor that had a strong influence on stabilising the elite sport policy landscape. Significant changes had already taken place before this decision in terms of the increase in resources and the establishment of a process for allocating funds to NGBs and monitoring and managing of that process by UK Sport but winning the bid in 2005 focused the government’s attention even more sharply. The extent to which these three factors were not only mutually reinforcing but also, over time, made policy change more difficult to propose and deliver will be discussed more fully later in relation to the assessment of the utility of the concept of path dependency.

As mentioned earlier, the predominance of stability as the central assessment of the elite sport policy landscape does not imply the absence of change or pressures for change. A key example of exogenous pressures for change was devolution and the steady increase in autonomy in relation to sport policy objectives possessed by the home countries. As noted in chapters 7 and 8, the devolved nature of sport can be a barrier to the development of talent as athletes look to move from home country managed programmes to UK elite programmes, and also for preparations for major
events. This is one area where macro-level politics impact upon the meso-level management of the system and even the individual level of athletes. This impact has been manifested in issues such as athlete personal award allocations where awards are made based on potential to win medals at the Olympic Games rather than the Commonwealth Games (when the home countries compete as separate teams) and the establishment of British teams in sports that have traditionally been contested by the individual home countries. The establishment of a British football team for London 2012 was highly problematic and political and Welsh and Scottish hockey players refused to play for the Great Britain team when it qualified for the FIH Champions Trophy in 2008/9 thus an England team was fielded instead (Middleton, 2008). However devolution also gives athletes the opportunity to receive funding and support at the home country level if they do not wish to be part of the UK programmes or indeed if they are not considered eligible for that support: the example of the badminton player Imogen Bankier, who decided to leave the funding and support of the British Badminton elite programme and instead train in her home nation of Scotland, was given in chapter 7 and the Paralympic cyclist Aileen McGlynn was not included in British Cycling’s programme to prepare for Rio 2016 but she receives support at a local level in Scotland (Lewis, 2014). There was a general awareness of the issues that devolution can present in the elite sport policy landscape amongst the interviewees and a determination to find ways to support athlete transition and for home country and UK organisations to work together. In summary, the impact of devolution, and the underpinning rise of nationalism, especially in Scotland, on the UK-wide elite sport policy landscape was modest.

The greatest observable change in the landscape, and the change that has arguably been the most heavily influenced by explicit government policy, has come about in the youth sector, as outlined in chapter 6. This is a policy area where successive governments have changed not only policy objectives but have also intervened in relation to how policy should be implemented. Under the Labour government, the focus for school sport was on regulation and programming of activities through SSPs and the PESSYP programmes whereas since 2010 the Coalition government has employed a more market-led approach, allowing schools to spend funds and implement policy within a set of policy guidelines that have prioritised competitive sport and participation in the School Games. The demise of programmes within the SSPs, especially the Gifted and Talented programme, could be described as having the potential to have had a damaging effect on youth talent identification and development because the opportunities available to students in schools have been
reduced. However, it could also be argued that the change from SSPs to market and not for profit sector provision is a second order change that affects the means but not the ends of policy. The government has argued that opportunities remain in the sport club system and that the NGBs' responsibility for talent has been enhanced by the establishment of the England Talent Pathway, which is coordinated and funded by Sport England. While programmes to support young talented people in schools in the UK have declined, there has been a growth of youth elite competitive opportunities internationally, including the establishment of the Youth Olympic Games. This development in the international context further emphasises the responsibility of the NGBs to identify and nurture talented young people.

Youth and school-based sport has been a lot more turbulent than the other two levels of the elite sport landscape explored in this research. The main reason for this is that physical education is the responsibility of the education sub-sector within which sport policy actors have had little consistent influence. The Coalition government have implemented policies designed to deregulate many sectors, including education, and the removal of the School Sport Partnerships (SSPs) infrastructure was in keeping with this approach and school sport has experienced similar levels of turbulence as the rest of the education sector. While pressure from groups who supported SSPs seemed to be a factor in the Department of Education delaying the cessation of the funding to the SSPs and the subsequent increase in funding for sport in primary schools, the funding for SSPs was eventually withdrawn and the failure by the Department of Education to re-establish a policy for supporting physical education and school sport could be described as an indication that sport was low on the policy agenda within education and that the policy objective of deregulation was a greater priority. DCMS published the policy document *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* in 2012, which covered certain aspects of developing sport for young people, including some responsibilities for schools through the School Games and the school-club links plans, but the policies are targeted at children and young people from 14 years of age so there are no explicit sport-led policy objectives for children below this age despite the government's funding of primary school sport. The School Games provide a framework for extra-curricular competitive sport, which is funded by DCMS and coordinated via Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust. The School Games also has a commercial sector sponsor, Sainsburys, which might suggest that, in addition to present government's preference for lower state intervention, there is insufficient resource provided by the government to run the programme, which could
be argued is an indicator of the low importance placed on school sport by the government.

However, it could be questioned how much of a difference a more systematic approach to talent identification in the school context actually made to the elite sport system overall. As noted in chapter 6, Bailey et al (2009) found that provision for identifying and supporting talented young people was variable across England so there was limited impact of the Gifted and Talented policy. It is possible that fewer talented young people will be found within schools now that there is not a specific policy objective for PE teachers to identify and support them but that does not mean that there will be an absence of young talent. The majority of talented young people develop their talent outside of school and Sport England has a specific focus on talent development through clubs so arguably the breakdown of the system in schools has little impact on the throughput of talented young people within Olympic sports. Just as it was noted above that sport policy is not a priority for the education policy sub-sector, so it can also be argued that school-based youth sport programmes are not significant within elite sport. Even if the sport policy sector wanted policies and programmes for talent identification and development in schools to change and be more proactive, the sport policy sub-sector does not have the power to challenge the Department for Education.

Although the most observable changes within the case studies examined in this research were in youth sport, these changes have not resulted in major impact upon the elite sport policy landscape as a whole. Other changes in the landscape, such as the introduction of talent transfer programmes and the narrowing of the number of sports that receive funding from UK Sport can be described as refining of the system with first- and second-order changes observable in the landscape but the policy objectives, Hall’s third order, have not fundamentally changed.

The establishment of the talent transfer programmes can be described as a second order change – the establishment of a new policy instrument – but it has not impacted upon all sports so arguably it is not a change in the landscape but merely a refinement to processes within UK Sport and a small number of sports. This example again indicates the challenge of implementing Hall’s framework when there is an observable change but it does not impact the whole of the policy sub-sector. However, for some of the sports that have been part of the talent transfer programmes the impact has been significant, for example athletes identified by
transfer programmes and channelled in to the sports of rowing and skeleton have won gold medals at the Olympic Games. However, the majority of sports that receive funding from UK Sport have not been part of the talent transfer programmes. This highlights the challenge of describing stability and change within the policy landscape if a change has a variable impact for different actors within the landscape.

While the overall government policy objectives for elite sport have remained stable, there have been regular refinements to the means of achieving those objectives including altering of overall funding amounts from the government and allocations to the sports. For some sports including handball, volleyball and water polo, the period 2006 to 2012 was very turbulent: before the London 2012 bid was won, these sports did not receive any financial support from UK Sport but were allocated funds from 2006 onwards because of the government’s plan to have British representation in all sports at the 2012 Games. The funding amounts for these sports from the Sydney 2000 to Rio 2016 Olympic cycles are shown in Table 9.2, which indicates significant first order change for these sports as their funding allocations from UK Sport for their elite programmes went from zero to millions of pounds and back to zero. This situation caused significant turbulence for the sports as they had six years to establish their elite programmes and develop the top level of the sport sufficiently to field teams at the Olympic Games but then received no funding once the London 2012 Games were over. The increase in government funding for the WCPP and the medal targets also impacted larger Olympic sports, such as cycling and athletics, as their funding was also significantly increased from 2006 onwards but these sports already had more established structures both as organisations and in terms of their elite-level programmes so there was less turbulence compared with the sports shown in Table 9.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handball</strong></td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£2,986,000</td>
<td>£2,924,721</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Volleyball</strong></td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£4,112,000</td>
<td>£3,536,077</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water Polo</strong></td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£3,147,000</td>
<td>£2,928,039</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UK Sport website (*this funding was for the period 2006-2008)

This turbulence does not only alter on a quadrennial basis in line with the Olympic Games but rather UK Sport reviews the allocation of funding on an annual basis so there can be significant change from one year to the next and in the middle of an Olympic cycle. In the first year of the Rio spending cycle, UK Sport invested
£5.9million in sports that have subsequently been dropped from the WCPP funding programme as they are not expected to win medals (UK Sport46). This includes basketball, which was initially allocated £7million to prepare for the Rio Olympic Games but this funding was withdrawn early in 2014 and British Basketball lost its appeal to have the funding reinstated.

For the government, the policy objective had changed very little: the overall aim was to achieve fourth place in the medal table at London 2012 but with the additional objective of having representatives in all sports, so it could be argued that there was a moderate third-order change but it is probably better seen as a second-order change related to the diplomatic objective of promoting the UK as effectively as possible through the vehicle of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. There was greater change in the first-order in terms of the intensity of the policy instrument as the public funding for the WCPP was increased. So there was significant turbulence in the means (first-order change) but little change to the ends (third-order change). The difference in how this change was experienced within the sport policy landscape again illustrates the challenge of identifying change and stating definitively the nature of the change as the same policy decisions can impact actors within the landscape so differently.

Since London 2012, in addition to the ongoing refinement of the intensity of the policy instrument – in this case the funding allocated to NGBs – there has also been refinement of the policy objective because the emphasis on medals has become more intense and any sports that are unlikely to achieve medals success have been dropped from the WCPP. The value of elite sport, and consequently the prioritisation of elite success, as mentioned previously, has become institutionalised in the UK. The public mood and the view of the mass media is supportive of the objective of elite sport success with the consequence that the policy landscape has enjoyed strong political salience, with successive governments being explicit in their support for elite sport. There are well-established structures and programmes in place to support the ongoing development of elite sport within this context of political and public support and sufficient resources to maintain the programmes.

Overall it can be argued that there has been stability in the elite sport policy landscape. This does not mean a complete absence of change but rather that

46 http://www.uksport.gov.uk/sport/summer-2016/ accessed 06/06/2014
change that has occurred has been more nuanced. There have been changes within sub-sectors of the elite sport policy landscape with little impact on the overall objectives of the system and the changes that have only impacted on certain actors within the landscape such as specific NGBs. There has also been short-term change for example the expanded group of sports that received funding from 2006 to 2012, and changes in the first order in terms of fluctuations in funding amounts. Compared with sectors such as education and health, the potentially turbulent policy context of the Coalition government and the financial crisis has had little impact on elite sport. London 2012 was a more significant factor in shaping the elite sport policy landscape and influencing the refinement of objectives and policy instruments.

9.4 Reflections on the literature

9.4.1 Theories of power

Theories of power proposed by Foucault and Lukes were highlighted in chapter 3. Both theorists’ work have provided useful lenses through which to view the data and describe the relationships and decision-making within the policy landscape. The exercise of power was observable within the landscape predominantly at the level of organisations. As will be noted in the next section, there are examples of the importance of individuals in shaping policy landscape but the impact of these individuals need to be seen in the context of the organisations with which they were associated. Policy entrepreneurs in the elite sport policy sub-sector tended to have a strong organisational foundation for their influence.

Foucault (1986) stressed that power is a dynamic process and a key consideration in the relationships between people and it is two-way process so one can both exercise power and be influenced by power simultaneously. Another important notion within Foucault’s theories is that power is diffuse within society rather than being something that is owned by individuals or organisations, which can be related to the value of sport within society that is not necessarily informed by evidence of it being useful in a specific way. This notion also relates to Kingdon’s political stream and the importance of public mood in influencing decision-making.

A key element of Foucault’s theorising on power when analysing this research is the notion of governmentality. Houlihan and Green (2009) highlighted the relationship
between modernisation and governmentality in terms of modernisation being a process of making sports organisations more disciplined and accountable and achieving a certain level of self-governance while still being regulated by the government via UK Sport. The majority of interviewees from sports NGBs used similar language about the importance of good governance, accountability and value for money. They understood the scrutiny that they were subject to, although some were not comfortable with the intensity of the scrutiny. This suggests that such practices and the language around these practices are embedded within the British elite sport system and that most organisations have internalised the values that have led to effective self-regulation required in order to receive public funding from UK Sport. A key question about the governmentality is whether it represents a rolling back of the state as individuals are more able to manage themselves and do not need to be governed by the state, or a rolling out of the state because the state is influencing citizens’ behaviour. In the case of modernisation and sport British policy, it could be argued that the successful modification NGBs’ of behaviour to align with the government’s standards suggests a rolling out of the state.

One weakness of Foucault’s theories on power is that he does not acknowledge the possibility of organisations accumulating power, particularly with reference to resource dependency, and although Foucault rejected the notion of power being located within the state or organisations, instead theorising that power is located at the individual level and within individual relationships, his concepts of power dynamics can be applied to organisations. The position of UK Sport in the landscape provides a good example of dynamic power. UK Sport is often perceived as the leader in the landscape as it makes key decisions around funding allocations and has in-house programmes that seek to develop the system, such as talent transfer programmes and elite coach development programmes and as an organisation it has the ability to include or exclude other organisations or actors within the system based on decisions made by its Board. However UK Sport’s power is dependent on being given that power by the government and there is interaction between the two in terms of granting funds, reporting and UK Sport advising government as an expert in the field.

Although, as noted above, the notions of diffuse power and governmentality are useful in this research, Lukes’ dimensions of power provide a more persuasive conceptualisation of power for examining the dynamics of policymaking and the relationships between organisations in the policy landscape. Examples of all three
dimensions of power described by Lukes’ (2005) have all been identified in the data. In terms of the one-dimensional view, the exercise of power by actor A over actor B, examples include the resource dependency relationships between UK Sport and NGBs in terms of the granting of funds by UK Sport and the setting of conditions regarding their use, for example in relation to governance, and the setting of criteria by which their use will be considered value for money, for example the achievement of medal targets at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. While Lukes was critical of the one-dimensional view in terms of it being overly simplistic, it is nonetheless present in the elite sport policy landscape and impacts upon the balance of power that favours stability over change.

Lukes’ (2005) two-dimensional view of power, the notion that those in a position of power can control what issues are discussed and prevent certain actors being involved in decision-making, also known as non-decisions, is evident in UK Sport’s role in the landscape. The decisions about which sports receive public funding has a side effect of dictating which sports have a relationship with UK Sport, and therefore the government, so if sports are not funded they tend to be excluded from other policy decisions. UK Sport’s dominant role in the landscape has tended to be self-reinforcing. The decisions post-2012 to limit funding to those sports that have a high chance of winning medals at the next two Games in 2016 and 2020 means that UK Sport is now working alongside a very select group of sports that have won medals previously and are expected to do so again and has largely absolved itself of the responsibility of supporting the development of more fledgling sports, seeing this as within the remit of Sport England. However, as noted above with regards to Foucault’s concepts of dynamic power, it should also be noted that the government’s decision to fund all Olympic and Paralympic sports in the period before London 2012 in order to maximise Team GB visibility at the Games removed this control from UK Sport so UK Sport’s power in the landscape is conditional on that power being granted by the government.

Lukes’ three-dimensional view of power concerns the less observable facets of power such as ideology and values. This closely links with the Multiple Streams framework’s political stream that focuses on the influence of public mood and political preferences and also on the centrality of values and social norms in New Institutionalism, both of which will be discussed in the next section. While the interactions of values and ideology in the landscape may not be immediately observable, the researcher identified certain language that was common amongst a
number of actors in the landscape, as noted above with regards to governmentality, and with regard to the general acceptance of particular objectives. Furthermore the impact of values and myths are ‘observable’ through policy outcomes such as the ongoing prioritisation of elite sport in the absence of specific evidence in support of the many personal and community benefits it claimed to generate. Whilst there is evidence that increased funding to elite sport and a more systematic approach has resulted in improved medal hauls, the rhetoric around the inspirational impact on community participation of British sporting success rests on a fragile foundation of empirical research therefore it can be argued that the stability of the overarching policy objective of improving British performance at the Olympic Games is based on ideology and myth. An impact of the weak base is that the policy remains stable as there is little challenge to the dominant ideology.

Conceptualising power is an important element for understanding dynamics between different actors within the policy landscape. There are clear examples of the theories of power proposed by both Foucault and Lukes within the data collected and both theories contribute to the researcher’s explanation of stability within the elite sport policy landscape. Moreover, the analysis of different conceptualisations of power was important in enabling a more sophisticated and sensitive application of meso-level analytical frameworks.

9.4.2 Meso-level frameworks

In the assessment of the potential usefulness of different meso-level frameworks in chapter 3, the researcher acknowledged the value of all four frameworks but concluded that, on the basis of previous sport policy research and the review of recent policy in chapter 2, an institutionalist approach would be adopted in conjunction with the Multiple Streams framework and the Punctuated Equilibrium framework. The three frameworks sensitised the researcher to different elements in the policymaking process and dynamics that might contribute to policy change and policy continuity and thus enabled a more nuanced and comprehensive basis for analysis.
The Punctuated Equilibrium framework offers useful conceptual tools for examining policy dynamics, i.e.: policy and change, rather than simply explaining change, as is the case with many frameworks in the literature. As Jones and Baumgartner (2012) noted, policy change does not necessarily come about at a time of electoral change and this has been true for elite sport policy in the UK as successive governments have maintained the same policy objectives since the late 1990s. In the case of elite sport, the quadrennial cycles of the Olympic and Paralympic Games may offer an alternative opportunity for punctuation when policy change can occur. Within the Punctuated Equilibrium framework, the role of a central group that can control policy, known as the policy monopoly, is highlighted as one of the key factors in policy stability. A policy monopoly can be identified in the elite sport policy landscape, mainly through the dominant role played by UK Sport. It could be argued that the policy monopoly was strengthened as a result of the British team’s success at London 2012, not only due to successfully meeting the medals targets, but also due to the explicit support from senior politicians including the Prime Minister. A risk to the policy stability is how the dominant policy instrument, the No Compromise strategy, is being viewed within the landscape: the growing, although still relatively muted, disquiet around the investment principles risks altering the policy image, to use the terminology of Punctuated Equilibrium.

An alternative way of examining the data using the Punctuated Equilibrium framework is to relate it to Hall’s three levels of change. It could be argued that the policy objectives for elite sport have remained stable, or there has been a state of equilibrium, and therefore, to use Hall’s terminology, there has not been a third-order change. However, there have been first- and second-order changes in the policy landscape, which could be described as punctuations. For example, in 2005, following the successful bid for London to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the policy image of British elite sport success changed: it was no longer a case of being successful at the Olympic Games but being successful at a home Olympic Games and also being visible in all of the Olympic sports. So at this time the scale and process for investment in elite sport was changed, which were first- and second-order changes. At this time the policy monopoly did not break down but UK Sport had to engage closely with the government to negotiate an increase in investment and also the approach to take in supporting sports. The No Compromise approach was relaxed slightly to allow for investment in sports that were unlikely to
win any medals in order to satisfy the government’s concern for there to be teams competing at the Games in all sports and increase Team GB visibility. As a result, UK Sport had to establish some new relationships with sports that had previously not been part of the WCPP.

It could be argued that punctuations do not have to occur at the level of policymaking or objective setting to be significant but that punctuations could also occur at lower levels within the policy landscape and result in first- or second-order changes, as described above, and do not need to be initiated by the government or its agencies. An example of a second-order change and punctuation in the elite sport policy landscape would be the increase in the number of athletes from Olympic sports becoming full-time in the 1980s: this was not brought about by a change in government policy but was a reflection of the international context and the Olympic Games becoming less strict about amateurism and resulted in changes to the way that athletes were funded and the way that they prepared for the Olympic Games and other major championships. This could be described as a radical change because it broke a tradition in sport that had existed for a century and which had led to many conflicts around amateurism versus professionalism within sport in the UK. In other words, in relation to the third-order objective of maximising medal success the end of amateurism can be seen as a second-order change. However, it would be possible to argue that amateurism as a significant policy in its own right and therefore its ending was a major third-order change.

As noted above, Punctuated Equilibrium offered the researcher useful tools and lenses for examining the data but the framework is fundamentally concerned with change and furthermore with radical change whereas the data indicate that the elite sport policy landscape in the UK is relatively stable despite a potentially turbulent context. Jones and Baumgartner’s (2012) assertions about the timing and context of change not necessarily being in line with electoral change has certainly been found to be true in the case of the British elite sport policy context but there have not been observable conditions during the period studied that align with the framework.

Multiple Streams framework

As noted above with regards to Punctuated Equilibrium, the Multiple Streams framework, proposed by Kingdon (1995), provides useful tools for examining different components of policymaking, even though the Multiple Streams framework focuses
on agenda setting as an element of policy change. There were a number of identifiable windows of opportunity, or times when policy could be changed, within the period examined in the research. The most significant windows or opportunity were the financial crisis, which began to impact on government spending and decision-making from 2009, and the change of government in 2010. As noted in chapter 1, these macro-level conditions led to significant changes across many areas of government policy and there was a risk that they could impact upon sport policy in terms of funding being cut and/or the Coalition government changing governance structures in order to deregulate the sector. However, these windows of opportunity had little impact upon the elite sport policy landscape. It could be argued that the opportunity to change elite sport policy during these windows of opportunity were constrained by the impact of London 2012 as decisions made about policy objectives and funding following the winning bid in 2005 and the general support for the British team and the hosting of the Games would have made it difficult for the Coalition government to implement radical change.

In the case of this research, one of the most useful concepts in the Multiple Streams framework is that of the political stream. The notion that policy can be influenced by political preferences of the leading party and by the mood of the public, which is often observable via the media, contradicts more rational models of policymaking that assume that decisions are informed by evidence and facts. The government has made attempts to rationalise its prioritisation of elite sport success using the idea that elite sport success inspires people, and especially young people, to participate in sport and that this is good for a healthy nation but this link is not supported by evidence. Both politicians and the public value elite sport and this provided a supportive ideological environment and justification for ongoing investment and support.

The problem stream is identifiable within the data. The issue that the government faced was that it wanted to ensure that the British teams at the Olympic and Paralympic Games were successful and that London 2012 was successful in promoting the brand of Great Britain (Grix and Houlihan, 2013). Elite success was viewed as something that could galvanise British identity at a time when there was economic uncertainty and a change of government and also a time when many facets of government policy were devolved to the home nations. The policy stream relates to potential solutions to the problems. Investment in elite sport in order to achieve medal success at the Olympic and Paralympic Games was a solution and
UK Sport was able to demonstrate a successful process for allocating and monitoring spending by NGBs. Furthermore, it had effectively modernised itself as an organisation and supported the modernisation of NGBs in line with the Labour government’s policy so it could present itself as a suitable partner for government. The policy stream could be described as having overlaps with path dependency, which will be discussed in full in the next section, as the solutions that are viable may be constrained by previous decisions, as noted above in relation to the impact of different windows of opportunity. The problem and policy streams are quite conventional in terms of examining a problem and the potential solutions to that problem but they can also be seen as being overly simple. The problem of ensuring medal success at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is in itself an over simplification of a very complex landscape that could be problematized, for example, in terms of social divisions such as class or gender or in terms of ethical issues such as anti-doping or corruption within federations.

Kingdon highlighted the significance of individuals, or policy entrepreneurs, in the process of bringing interests within the streams together during a window of opportunity. Interviewees highlighted the role of the leadership of UK Sport as being very important in the elite sport policy landscape, especially former Chair, Sue Campbell, because of the abilities of senior figures to access and work with the government.

Overall, the Multiple Streams framework also provides some useful tools for examining policy. The political stream, the role of individuals and the timing of policy change, or windows of opportunity, are particularly useful and applicable within this research, as they have provided useful language for understanding and explaining the data relating to the value of elite sport and the importance of the policy environment. However, as an overall framework, Multiple Streams primarily focuses on policy change over a period of time whereas this research has found that there has been little change in the elite sport policy landscape despite the overall political context.

New Institutionalism

As noted in chapter 3, new institutionalism is not a unified theory but rather incorporates three different types of institutionalism: sociological institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and historical institutionalism. The notions of
institutions not only as structures and organisations but values and norms within a policy sector were useful and identifiable elements within the research.

Sociological Institutionalism focuses on the dynamics within institutions in terms of how interactions and norms influence individuals and institutions. The prioritisation of elite sport success has itself become a norm within the sport policy landscape in the UK. Formal and informal structures around elite sport development; such as models of accountability for funding and approaches to supporting athletes with centralised development programmes and the use of sport science and medicine are well established within the landscape. When sports innovate or use approaches, other sports may copy this approach. For example, British Cycling employed a psychiatrist as part of their medical team ahead of London 2012, which has been perceived as a useful innovation for supporting athletes and has now been replicated by British Athletics and also the England football team.

Sociological Institutionalism also provides a useful lens for examining the position of the UK within the international elite sport context and how elite sport policy objectives are influenced by this context. The political importance of elite sport success on the international stage is something that has become a norm all over the world with countries becoming increasingly competitive. The SPLISS study (De Bosscher et al, 2008), and subsequent studies associated with this group of researchers, identified a number of common elements of nations’ approached to developing elite sport. Interviewees in this research identified the importance of learning from other nations and the fact that other nations are now looking to replicate approaches used in some sports in the UK thus indicating that systematic approaches to development of elite sport are institutional norms within international elite sport. Sociological institutionalism reinforces insights from other analytical frameworks especially the significance of ideas and political mood highlighted in the Multiple Streams framework and the importance of norms relates to the tendency for path dependency to develop, as will be outlined later in this section.

Rational Choice Institutionalism focuses on motives within an institution and how this shapes interactions and decisions, especially where individual gain is prioritised over collective gain. Within the data, this is identifiable at the organisational level where, through No Compromise, there is a preference for giving more support to those sports that are most likely to provide a good return on investment, which in this case means winning medals at the Olympic and Paralympic Games. This approach
benefits a select group of sports and within this select group of NGBs there is a significant difference in financial allocation, which itself is subject to institutionalisation. The difference between allocations to different NGBs is in part based on the number of athletes that can compete at the Olympic or Paralympic Games, and therefore how many are involved in the WCPP for each sport, but it is also based on which sports have the greatest hope of winning medals at the Games but it is not necessarily a rational process.

_No Compromise_ provides UK Sport with a framework for making rational choices but it could be argued that this rationality only examines short-term gains (the UK Sport system focuses on medal potential at the next two Olympic Games so its focus is limited to a maximum of eight years) and could be described as risky. Although the investment in sports has led to consistent medal yields over a number of Olympiads, the nature of the international context with growing competition and the power of the IOC to control Olympic competition could make this position precarious. The example was given in chapter 8 of cycling whereby countries can now enter just one cyclist in Olympic track events thus reducing the potential medal haul for each country. It could also be questioned whether the high levels of investment for athletics and swimming, £26,824,206 and £20,795,838 respectively, for the Rio funding cycle (see Table 8.2), are rational choices as they have the potential for high medal yields because of the number of events in the sports’ programmes but they have not performed as well as sports such as cycling and rowing in terms of total medals won at recent Games. There are many factors that impact upon these differences, not least the higher intensity of international competition in some sports, but it begs the question as to why swimming and athletics remain priorities and it could be argued that these decisions are not rational but rather are politically motivated and the embedded value of these sports is too great for them to lose their support.

In this research historical institutionalism provided the most useful point of reference because there are clear indications that the historical context of elite sport policy is influential in explaining in policy change and stability. The concepts of historical contingency, path dependence and critical junctures are all identifiable within the data. Historical contingency refers to the influence of past decisions on current or future decisions. Within elite sport policy, the initial National Lottery investment in the late 1990s was in sports that were ‘ready’ in an organisational sense to receive public funds so from the beginning of the WCPP and the public investment in elite sport, the more developed sports were favoured. This has continued with an
approach to allocation that rewards those who have demonstrated good results and that expect to achieve the same or better results in the future rather than support more fledgling sports or those with less able to demonstrate that they will be successful in the future. As noted in chapter 3, it is too simplistic to state that previous decisions determine subsequent decisions but they do influence and often constrain subsequent choices as norms develop within the system. As mentioned in chapter 8, fencing and boxing have both experienced changes in their income due to being able to demonstrate their increased success.

A critical juncture is a point in time when institutions are established or strengthened. In terms of critical junctures identified in this research, there are three points that were identified from the data: firstly, the establishment of UK Sport and introduction of National Lottery funding in 1997. These two actions led to the establishment of a network of organisations that developed elite sport in the UK, supported by financial resources and government support. The second critical juncture that can be identified was the successful bid in 2005 to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This focused the government’s attention on elite sport and key decisions about resourcing and management of the WCPP followed in 2006. The third critical juncture was the success of the British team at the Beijing 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games that reinforced and justified the decision by government to increase its investment in elite sport. Interviewee R\textsuperscript{47}, a senior figure in British sport, stated “in Beijing we crossed a certain line” in terms of establishing an understanding of the success of the British team and the extent of the success, both for the government and the British general public – elite success had become institutionalised.

The notion of path dependency is a valuable tool for examining the way in which policies become established, refined and maintained over a period of time so it provides a useful lens for examining stability and how it has been achieved. The importance of self-reinforcement of the path dependence is evident with the role of UK Sport within the landscape as it is responsible for allocating funding to NGBs and monitoring their spending. The stability of the system is reliant on government support but UK Sport’s retention of power in the landscape also contributes to the

\textsuperscript{47} Interviewee R has held many positions within sport in the UK including being an elite athlete and a senior official for a number of different government and non-government sports organisations over many years and therefore is not referred to in this research as representing a specific organisation.
stability as the decisions made by its Board and the success of the system contributes to the continuation of the path.

One consideration for the researcher when using the path dependency model was the need for a description of events that occur within each phase of the model and identifying critical junctures. The three critical junctures outlined above marked the transitions between phases in the path dependency and at each critical juncture there were refinements to policy and the elite sport system. Table 9.3 indicates the time period 1997 to 2014 and shows the different phases of path dependency described by Sydow et al (2005) and the evidence of these phases and the critical junctures in elite sport policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Key events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preformation phase</td>
<td>Up to 1996</td>
<td>Establishment of the Department for National Heritage and the publication of Sport: Raising the Games (DNH, 1995) highlighted elite sport as a policy priority Poor performance by the British team at the 1996 Olympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical juncture 1</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>UK Sport and National Lottery funding for sport established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path formation 1</td>
<td>1997-2005</td>
<td>Improvements in Team GB performances at 2000 and 2004 Olympic and Paralympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical juncture 2</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Winning the London 2012 bid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path formation 2</td>
<td>2005-2008</td>
<td>Successful London 2012 bid Full responsibility for WCPP transferred to UK Sport Funding increase negotiated Decision taken to fund wider range of sports up to London 2012 to ensure British representation across all sports Initiation of talent transfer programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical juncture 3</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Success for Team GB at the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path formation 3</td>
<td>2008-2012</td>
<td>Growing public and political support as the British teams prepare for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games Slight funding reductions due to recession (2009) and CSR (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock-in</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Success for Team GB at the London Olympic and Paralympic Games Government states a target of maintaining or improving the medal haul at the next Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path dependence</td>
<td>2012 onwards</td>
<td>Funding guaranteed for preparations for Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016 (no reduction in budget at 2013 Spending Review) Reduced number of sports receiving public money as part of WCPP in order to focus on sports most likely to win medals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Sydow et al (2005: 9)
Before 1997 government support for elite sport was less coordinated and resource for elite sport was limited. The government focus on elite sport under Prime Minister John Major was an important trigger for a more coordinated approach and the British team only achieving one gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games reinforced the need for an elite sport system. The government was supportive and the establishment of the National Lottery provided a potential new income stream for sport and objectives were beginning to form, which can be described as a third-order change (Hall, 1986) and this process of development aligns with the description by Sydow et al (2005: 8) of the preformation phase being an “open search process”. Following the first critical juncture of the introduction of National Lottery funding for elite sport and the establishment of the GB Sports Council, later UK Sport, there was a clearer path emerging for elite sport.

The winning of the London 2012 bid in 2005 was a critical juncture and the resultant path formation phase saw refinements to the system and in particular the first order change of significant increase in funding to UK Sport for the NGBs to prepare for the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2008 and 2012. The London Games focused government attention on Olympic and Paralympic sport and shaped policy decisions both in elite sport and the wider sport policy sub-sector as the government sought to increase sports participation and achieve other legacies from hosting the Games.

The data indicate that NGBs perceived 2008 to be an important turning point when the British team achieved fourth place in the medals table at the Beijing Olympic Games, which was generally better than expected. This was seen as an important point in time for the justification of the increase in funding to the Olympic and Paralympic programmes and for strengthening the public mood in support of London 2012. As noted above, interviewee R described 2008 as being a time when public and government awareness and appreciation of British success grew. It could be argued that 2008 was the lock-in point for the path, but as refinements were made to the system after that dare, 2008 is better described as a second critical juncture in the process of establishing a path dependency.

The British teams’ achievements at London 2012 further consolidated the public and political support for the policy of funding elite Olympic and Paralympic sport and at this point the path became locked-in. Preceding this, London 2012 was generally accepted as a suitable justification for the government’s approach to supporting elite
sport but with the London Games over the government’s support continued, unchanged by the lack of domestic focus. So London 2012 can be described as the lock-in point for the path dependency being established. The issue of identifying exactly where the critical juncture and lock-in occur is one of the challenges of using path dependency as a framework for analysing the establishment and refining of a policy path.

A further concern about the path dependency model is the lack of explanation for the end of a path, as a path cannot continue indefinitely – at some point the policy or the resources to support the policy will decrease or cease completely. It may be useful to incorporate concepts from the Punctuated Equilibrium framework to explain how the path can cease, in particular the concept of policy image, meaning how an issue is portrayed and understood in the landscape: if the policy/path begins to be viewed as problematic then it could be abandoned and the policy could return to the pre-formation phase or take a different path. In the case of elite sport policy, there is currently a general agreement among key actors in the landscape that achieving medal success at the Olympic Games is important and that the approach of allocating funding to a specific group of NGBs via UK Sport using the No Compromise approach is a suitable policy for achieving this objective.

Overall, historical institutionalism has provided the most useful tools for the researcher in analysing the data in this research. The concepts of historical contingency, critical junctures and the phases of path dependency are all identifiable within the data and these concepts provide a framework for describing stability and change, including more nuanced change, within the elite sport policy landscape. These concepts, and the broader elements of institutionalism, including the importance of values, ideas and social construction, provide effective lenses for identifying and understanding policymaking and explaining recent stability in the policy landscape. As noted above, the researcher proposes additional path formation phases to fully explain the data gathered in this research and also a consideration of the context in which a path may end. The majority of existing frameworks focused on change and the circumstances in which change comes about whereas historical institutionalism allowed for an examination of circumstances in which and the processes by which policy stability is maintained.
9.4.3 Concluding comments on the literature

Sections 9.3 and 9.4 have indicated the importance of the theoretical underpinnings of this research. When the research was initiated it was expected that the elite sport system in the UK would experience turbulence as a result of the economic crisis and the change of government in 2010 but instead the system was found to be relatively stable in spite of the political and economic context. Thus the research has shown that analysing stability within a policy system and enquiring as to the reasons for stability in the face of potential turbulence is a valid pursuit: it is not just radical change that warrants investigation. The research has shown the applicability of key theories identified in the existing literature to a condition of policy stability, not only policy change. Furthermore, the triangulation of application of Hall’s (1986) conceptualisation of change at different levels, Lukes’ (2005) theories of power and New Institutionalism as a meso-level framework for analysis has produced an appropriate structure for examining the complexities of the elite sport policy landscape. The research has shown that combining these theories allows the researcher to achieve an appropriate depth of analysis with suitable language to describe the nuances of this particular policy landscape.

The contribution to sport and policy analysis literature is threefold. Firstly, the research has provided a very detailed analysis of the nature of elite sport policy and the impact of both macro-level economic and political factors and also the impact of hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The researcher’s access to high-level organisations and individuals within the landscape adds significant value to the data presented. Secondly, the research has made a contribution to the small but growing literature on sport policy analysis by using a framework for analysis that was predominantly informed by New Institutionalism and with a suggestion of improving the theory of Historical Intuitionalism and path dependency. Finally, in the research there has been an application of theory to examine stability and change and particularly the implementation of Hall’s (1986) model of change to calibrate the stability and change in the landscape.

9.5 Fulfilment of the research aim and objectives

The aim of the research, to provide an analysis of public policy stability and change in the landscape of England/UK elite sport since 2005 has been fulfilled based on the achievement of the three outcomes as follows:
1. To identify the key elements of the elite sport policy landscape
   The three components of the policy landscape, namely organisations, funding and political salience, that were used in this research were identified through examining the historical context, which was presented in Chapter 2, and reinforced by the data that was gathered. As well as contributing to the understanding the complexities of the elite sport system, identifying the key elements of the policy landscape provided a structure for analysing and presenting the data in the thesis.

2. To trace the emergence of talent identification and development and elite sport success as priorities of sport policy
   Talent identification amongst young people has been found to be a policy priority for successive governments but the Coalition government has treated it very differently compared with its Labour predecessor, as described in Chapter 6. Talent development has been impacted upon by devolution as some athletes struggle to bridge the gap between regional/home nation standard of competition and international competition representing the UK. It is the NGBs and the home countries, rather than the government, which are tackling this issue. A new solution to the issue of talent identification and development has been the introduction of talent transfer programmes, in particular by UK Sport, with these interventions beginning in 2007, as indicated in Chapter 7.

3. To identify the impact on the elite sport policy landscape of the financial crisis, which began in 2008 and the change of government in 2010
   Overall the impact of macro-level economic and political changes has been minimal in the elite sport policy landscape. Chapter 6 focused on youth sport and it was found that youth talent and competitive sport for young people has been affected by the change of government due to the Coalition’s ideology around education and the place of sport within schools. Funding for elite sport programmes has been cut but this has been minimal, in spite of the financial crisis. In terms of impact on talent transfer, talent development and high-level elite sport, the hosting of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games was found to have a greater influence than the financial crisis and the establishment of the Coalition government as it provided a focal point for policymaking and
meant that funding and political salience remained high. As described in Chapter 8, the ‘No Compromise’ approach has provided an important instrument for guiding UK Sport’s work and decision making and the government has been generally supportive of this approach.
Reference list


Cunningham, J. (2001) *Elite sports funding review: A report to the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport*, London: DCMS


Department for Culture, Media and Sport (no date) Lottery grants data [http://www.lottery.culture.gov.uk/Search.aspx](http://www.lottery.culture.gov.uk/Search.aspx) accessed 25/03/2014
Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2000) *A Sporting Future for All*, London: DCMS


Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2008a) *Playing to Win: A New Era for Sport*, London: DCMS

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2008b) *Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games*, London: DCMS


Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2012a) *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life*, London: DCMS

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2012b) *School Games 2011/12 Statistical Release*, London: DCMS


https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcms-spending-review-settlement-
letters-october-2010 access 23/06/2014

Jeffreys, K. (2012) *Sport and Politics in Modern Britain: The Road to 2012*,
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan

Legislative Agenda of the UK government, 1911-2008’, *The Policy Studies Journal*,
40 (1), pp. 89-107

Jones, B. D. and Baumgartner, F. R (2012) ‘From There to Here: Punctuated
Equilibrium to the General Punctuation Thesis to a Theory of government Information

Jones, I. (2011) ‘Funding and sustaining sport development’ in Houlihan, B. & Green,
530-541

Administration*, 83 (3), pp. 553-571

Green, M. (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Sports Development*, Abingdon: Routledge,
pp. 217-230

2016’, *The Telegraph*, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/9470453/London-
2012-Olympics-Government-guarantees-athlete-funding-to-2016.html accessed
21/01/2014

25/07/2014


The Sports Council (1982a) Sport in the Community: The next ten years, London: The Sports Council


Sport England (no date) Key elements of an effective England Talent Pathway, London: Sport England


Sport Wales (2011) A Vision for Sport in Wales, Cardiff: Sport Wales


Appendix A – Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Interviewee code</th>
<th>Organisation type</th>
<th>Organisation code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/02/2012</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NGB - Olympic</td>
<td>O1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/03/2012</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>NGB - Olympic</td>
<td>O2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/03/2012</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>NGB - Non-Olympic</td>
<td>NO1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/04/2012</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>NGB - Olympic</td>
<td>O3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/04/2012</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>NGB - Olympic</td>
<td>O4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/05/2012</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>NGB - Non-Olympic</td>
<td>NO2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/05/2012</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>NGB - Non-Olympic</td>
<td>NO3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/07/2012</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>NGB - Non-Olympic</td>
<td>NO4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/08/2012</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>NGB - Non-Olympic</td>
<td>NO5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/10/2012</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>NGB - Olympic</td>
<td>O5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/11/2012</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/01/2013</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Government-funded organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29/01/2013</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/03/2013</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Government-funded organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/04/2013</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/05/2013</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Senior figure in British sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/06/2013</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/2013</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Government-funded programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/08/2013</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>Non-government organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/11/2013</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Senior figure in British sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B – Example interview schedule

1. What have been the key changes in the landscape for sport in the past 5-10 years?
   - Relationships – government, UK Sport, Sport England
   - View of government – political saliency
   - What has influenced change?
   - How significant was hosting London 2012?
   - The organisation’s operations e.g.: boards, structures, reporting

2. Funding:
   - Are organisations/sports in competition with each other for public and/or private funding?
   - What level of interest is there from the commercial sector?
   - What is the nature of the organisation’s engagement with the commercial sector? (e.g.: corporate social responsibility)

3. What current activities/future opportunities are there for developing elite sport further?
   - Talent identification and development
   - Role of education and/or School Games
   - Development of elite coaching
   - Development of sport science services

4. What is the contribution of higher education sector? What more could they do to be involved with elite sport?

5. What are the challenges and opportunities for the future?
   - How secure is public funding?
Appendix C – Example interview extract

Interviewer D, Olympic NGB (organisation O3)

2 April 2012 2pm at NGB head office

PC: To begin with, could you describe the main changes you have seen taken place in the last 3 or 4 years, or earlier if relevant.

Int D: [The NGB] started getting high performance funding back in the late 90s and we’ve always been a top-heavy organisation. We’re very weak underneath and we get a lot of money to try to deliver Olympic medals and UK Sport wants that money very much pinnacle-focused and we’ve always argued that until we get the pathways right it’s very hard to just spend a lot of money and deliver a lot of medals up here. So for us it’s been a massively good thing and now we’re sort of balanced. We’ve always had £2million a year from UK Sport, very little from Sport England, now we get over £2million from Sport England and it gives you the chance to actually build a national governing body and build the right pathways.

For me, that’s been the biggest direct change in British sport. I think there’s also been some very good news stories, there’s been some excitement, there’s been some good placings in the Olympic Games in Beijing. I think on the Olympic sport side it’s pretty much all moving in the right direction but we’ll have to see where all that goes and London is obviously the ultimate test, which I think we’re going to do really well in. That for me has been the biggest change and with that extra funding from Sport England, and all sports got a good chunk from that change, they pretty much gave extra to everyone, we did extraordinarily well, it pretty much did a lot of sports good.

But with that then became the mantra of governance and leadership and modernisation. So with that money comes a lot of new hoops to jump through and the hoops are getting more and more onerous all the time and the current government, that’s all they want to talk about, that’s the only message we’re getting out is governance. Do you have 25% females on your board, do you have 30% independents, do you have this, do you have that? It’s all good stuff but sometimes I think sports struggle because we’re all moving from membership organisations, which we all started out as, simply a bunch of clubs came together and formed a membership organisation, and now we’re trying to be big, all-encompassing businesses. I think there is certainly a movement within sport to almost completely shed the hat of membership organisations and become a business, and that’s a difficult battle. We have a load of people on our board of directors who wouldn’t know a business from a barn, they’re literally all ex-[sport] coaches, know [the sport], love [the sport], want to give something back to [the sport] but on the business side there’s nothing there. So we go into every board meeting now and talk about we’re going to do this, we’re going to do that, risk management and they’re like ‘what the hell are you talking about?’ I wouldn’t imagine that we’re too different from most sports that are making that difficult transition. The biggest change has been massive growth in participation, developmental funding and with that, equally, a massive movement towards good governance and turning your membership organisation into a business. That’s what we’ve all been battling with recently.

PC: So a lot more scrutiny…
Int D: There was always financial scrutiny. Now we have to have every year, and they criticise us on it, a business continuity plan so if there is an earthquake how is [the NGB] going to continue operating. We have a 100-page business continuity plan now – what if there’s an earthquake, what if there’s a power cut. These sorts of things, two years ago we would have laughed if they had told us to do something like that. Our risk management strategy is 50 pages and last time they looked at it they said it could do with some beefing up. Literally it’s like someone has taken a playbook from the institute of directors good governance and has said you guys have to sing to this same hymn sheet and although everyone is fully in favour of getting better I think the thing for me is we have to be careful that we don’t lose some people along the way. At our board meetings now half they board says ‘tell them to screw off, they can keep their money, we don’t have to do this’. So there’s a balance between modernising and pushing us into the next level of governance but it’s been challenge in that respect.

PC: Where is that coming from – both Sport England and UK Sport?

Int D: Both, collectively. And there’s the Sport and Recreation Alliance and the government, DCMS, who gives them their Exchequer money and approved the Lottery funding, that’s their message too. At the end of the day a little of this is about credibility, we’ve had some spectacular bankruptcies, we’ve had all of that in the past and they wants sports to be more and more credible, more and more stable The Football Association is probably the worst-run organisation in all of sport but they do a £600million per year turnover so they’re not going anywhere: they’re here forever! When you tell the Football Association – I think they’ve had one female board member ever – and now they’re being told that by 2017 they have to have 25% female board members otherwise they’re not going to get any public funding. Now the Football Association, they do half a billion pound turnover, what do they need the government money for, but they get massive government money. DCMS directly puts £30million per year into the Football Foundation and they get this and they get that. They get substantial money, more than any other sport and people don’t realise that because it goes directly from the government to the FA so they’ll be running around saying how are we going to do all this. So it’s a challenging time.

15mins 39

PC: How do you see the Olympics playing a role in increasing participation?

Int D: I think it can inspire. The fact of the matter is that for the main world sports the Olympics is not the pinnacle event. Olympic soccer isn’t going to inspire anybody, Olympic tennis is not going to inspire anybody, Olympic basketball isn’t going to inspire anybody - the big world sports – volleyball it would, track and field certainly. Swimming, it’s certainly the pinnacle on the swimming side; they don’t have any events that are comparable. The Olympics in general, it’s a feel-good, national good factor, you’ve got to do well, you’ve got to place, you’ve got to beat the Germans and the French. 20-30 years ago East Germany used to come first in the Olympics. East Germany was this tiny little Soviet thing that used to dope the hell out of everybody but the way they would actually vie with the USA for supremacy when the Russians weren’t at their peak is they did it with the lab rat scenario: they picked the most obscure sports and they trained people, they has systematic doping so they did everything wrong but they did very well at the Olympics. You can manipulate a system like that but East Germany could never have been the world soccer champions, they would never be the world basketball champions, they could never
be the world volleyball champions. The sports that are truly hyper competitive worldwide where every country plays, every country is pretty good at it; it’s a different equation. For me, that’s a big challenge that British sport faces now. One of the greatest things that has happened out of the Beijing Olympic Games is that more people cycle here. I’m a cyclist and when I drive around in my car now the amount of cyclists you see on the road now as opposed to four years ago is way greater. People all of a sudden thing we’re a great cycling nation, we dominate the world at cycling, and it has inspired people to get on their bikes, people that would otherwise not have been on their bikes have been inspired by that.

PC: So do you see the Olympic Games as an opportunity for [the NGB]?

Int D: Oh yes! At [the NGB] we have about 50,000 members and there’s probably 100,000 more people who do [the sport] in the UK and that should be 3-400,000 people. We should have more people doing [the sport]. Britain was involved with forming the international federation: we were there right at the forefront and [the sport] was pretty strong, we’ve had 17 Olympic medals already and unfortunately in the last three Olympics we’ve had one. The amount of countries that are killing themselves doing [the sport] now – every time I go to a competition there are three new countries and you think, where did they come from? And you’re talking about Kazakhstan, all the old Soviet – Uzbekistan, Mongolia. All these hard-hitting ex-Soviet places have taken [the sport] and they’ll kill you because they don’t have much else, I guess. It’s a hyper-competitive thing.

Certainly we put all these systems in place, all these resources, programmes, services and the reality is a little bit of success will be twice as effective as everything we do. If we went to London and got two gold medals, that will be a bigger impact on the sport than everything we’ve worked hard to do for the last few years. But the reality is you have to do both – you have to put the infrastructure, you have to do the posters, you have to have opportunities, we have to get things better and better but what we could really use is a heavy duty success because it’s absolutely proof positive, British Cycling is the example.

PC: How long do you think that window of opportunity post-Games, assuming [the sport] does well, how long do you see that lasting? Is it four years? As you mention, people are still cycling post-Beijing...

Int D: Well that’s different – the people who are cycling and who are inspired by that are not race cyclists and that’s the difference. They go back and forth to work, they go out for a bike ride, that sort of thing, they’ll never join the British Cycling federation, it’s a different kind of animal. I think it’s been, and I think Sky has contributed through the sponsorship deal, advertising, ‘get on your bike’, that sort of thing, the Sky Ride, they’ve put millions into it and it’s been brilliant. I think that if we go out and get success in London, get a couple of good medals, get the star-factor back, if you will, the immediate hit off that is not a long-term thing to be honest. We could see a 20% jump in our clubs on the back of that. The big question though, longer term, is retention – it’s always about retention: the experience we give them and how long we can hold them in. I can see a 20% jump in the new people we have walking into our clubs.
Appendix D – Key words used for document search

- Elite sport
- High performance sport
- Youth sport
- Youth talent
- Competitive sport
- Talent identification
- Talent transfer
- Talent development
- Olympic Games
- Paralympic Games
- London 2012
- Medals/medal targets
- No Compromise
- Modernisation
- Devolution
- PESSYP/PESSCL
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Department for National Heritage
- Sports Minister/Minster for Sport
- Sports council
- UK Sport
- Sport England
- Youth Sport Trust
- Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme
- Names of specific sport NGBs (in particular those that were part of the interview sample)