Evaluation of the school sports co-ordinator programme: case study report (partnership K)

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


Additional Information:

- This case-study report provides an evaluation of School Sports Partnership Programme K. It is based on 25 interviews with individuals who participate in different ways in the delivery of partnership goals. Part of the School Sport Partnerships (SSP) programme undertaken by the Loughborough Partnership for the DfES, Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust (YST). The study ran for six years and concluded in 2009.

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Evaluation of the School Sport Partnership Programme

The Loughborough Partnership

Case study report: Partnership K

Institute of Youth Sport
School of Sport and Exercise Sciences
Loughborough University

November 2004
School Sport Partnership K

1.0 Summary

This case-study report provides an evaluation of School Sports Partnership Programme K. It is based on 25 interviews with individuals who participate in different ways in the delivery of partnership goals. The main observations for this partnership are:

- The Partnership covers a wide geographical area encompassing both urban and rural schools. Pupils come from districts experiencing varying levels of economic and social deprivation. This can be a barrier to take up of Out Of School Hours (OOSH) activities, even if the costs to participants are nominal.
- Facilities at rural schools, especially primary schools are acknowledged as imposing constraints on what can be delivered. In addition, transport issues can act as a barrier to participation in after school activities. It may be that special schools experience additional hurdles relating to transport.
- Some concern was voiced that means of measuring the impact of PE had not been clearly identified. Many respondents stated that there was little or no ‘hard evidence’ to support their impressions. Most of the evidence of improvement resulting from the programme was subjective and anecdotal. Respondents were careful to point out that while they were able to cite individual examples of improvement in students’ attitudes and behaviour, they could not say to what extent this was due to involvement in partnership activities.
- The Partnership was thought to have improved the quality and quantity of PE at the schools in the Partnership, and this was particularly felt to be the case within the primary schools.
- The Partnership was thought to have been instrumental in facilitating schools’ links with local clubs and coaches.
- The number of pupils participating in inter and intra school competition, as well as at county level was said to have increased as a result of partnership activity.
- Standards of academic achievement within the hub school have increased. It was suggested that while this could not be reasonably attributed solely to the Partnership, the increase in quality and quantity of PE has contributed to pupils’ engagement with other subjects through cross-curricular teaching involving PE.
- Other schools reported increased take up of GCSE and A level PE and improved grades over the past three years. It was suggested that this might be partly attributable to the involvement of external coaches, facilitated by the partnership.
- The Partnership’s focus on and delivery of the Sports Leadership Awards schemes (JSLA, CSLA and the introduction of PSLA) were felt to be a key part of its success, and to have had an impact on some students’ behaviour and awareness of teamwork, leadership, etc.
- ‘Step 1, 2, 3’, an initiative to bridge the gap for pupils from school to local clubs was felt to be an important and innovative component of partnership activity.
• The heads of secondary schools were less aware than primary heads of specific benefits of the Partnership, but were supportive of their PE departments and SSCos’ efforts.
• The shortage of qualified coaches in the area was perceived as a barrier to increasing participation in sport.
• There was some disparity among participants about the role of SSCos and the programme as a whole. While those who had had early involvement and induction in the programme perceived their role to be that of a facilitator and not a teacher, more recent recruits talked of the benefits of team-teaching and delivering lessons in primary schools.
• Concern was raised that it would not be possible to sustain all partnership activity when funding ended and that this anxiety was creating a barrier to start some new activities that might not be easily sustainable.

2.0 Overall assessment of performance

2.1 Strengths of the Partnership and examples of good practice include:

• The focus on leadership activities, including the innovative PSLA programme, and the opportunities given to young leaders that are encouraging more young people to take up coaching activity.
• The Step 1,2,3 programme which is helping to sustain local sports club membership by helping children make the transition from school based activity to community based activity
• The introduction of multi-sports events in some areas
• Co-ordinated approach to developing programmes of work for primary schools
• Enabling SSCos to lead in different aspects of the Partnership
• Communication strategies, in particular the Partnership newsletter which is widely disseminated and considered to be a very effective and positive way of reporting partnership activities
• Good project management and financial monitoring
• The delivery of high quality PLT, SSCo and TOPS training
• Effective networking both within the Partnership, and externally with local sports clubs, local council, LEA, YST, Big Lottery Fund and NGBs.

2.2 Weaknesses, challenges and concerns:

• To develop methods for the assessment of progress towards partnership objectives, in particular in terms of performance.
• To collect and analyse data relating to participation.
• To find ways in which to assess the impact of the programme on pupils’ behaviour, attitudes and academic achievement.
• To support the development of the Phase II partnership network.
• To develop further links between primary and secondary colleagues.
• To increase primary teachers’ confidence and expertise in delivering PE.
• To continue to develop the leadership programme.
• To raise awareness of the Partnership among colleagues, parents and pupils.
• To clarify and develop the role of the Steering Group Committee.
• To access additional funding to resolve transport issues.

3.0 Recommendations for action

This section presents some of the broader issues that were raised by interviewees. In some cases they relate to specific aspects or members of the Partnership, others are more general reflections on features of partnership working.

3.1 For the PDM:

• The PDM should clarify the role of Phase I and Phase II SSCos’ as there is currently a disparity in terms of their understanding of their role. In particular Phase I SSCos interviewed said that it had been made clear that their time was not to be used to teach in primary schools. Conversely, Phase II SSCos welcomed the opportunities to team-teach and found this highly beneficial. In order for all clusters to operate consistently all SSCos should perhaps be given an opportunity to review and refresh the parameters of their remit.
• The opportunities for networking and sharing experiences and ideas with colleagues should be encouraged as this was widely thought to be one of the most positive aspects of the programme. There was general agreement that more of this would be beneficial, especially now that the Partnership had grown significantly.

3.2 For the LEA:

• To continue to emphasise the role of the LEA officer who is perceived to be a good source of assistance regarding local issues

4.0 Partnership Details

4.1 Established in 2000, the Partnership originally comprised five secondary schools and 21 primary schools, including one special school (Phase I). In September 2003 an additional five secondary and 43 primary schools joined the Partnership, thus widening its geographical coverage to incorporate schools in more rural settings (Phase II). There is an SSCo attached to all but one of the secondary schools, and a PLT located within each primary school. Key partners are the Local Sports Partnership; Youth Sport Trust; the Local Education Authority Officer, and Local Authority Sports Development Officers.
4.2 The SSP bid submitted by the hub school stated that approximately 95% of the pupil’s at all five secondary schools in Phase I of the Partnership came from an Education Action Zone. The Partnership operates in an area of significant deprivation, with several schools working with young people in what were described as ‘very challenging circumstances’. The more rural schools face additional difficulties relating to transport issues, small staff numbers and very limited facilities.

4.3 All of these factors present challenges to the School Sport Partnership Programme. Some children’s family circumstances are such that they are unable to attend even heavily subsidised activities. As one respondent said ‘even if you make it free, some of them can’t afford the bus fare to get to it’. Rural schools may struggle to find transport to take pupils to another site to use facilities, and it can be difficult for children reliant on public transport to attend after-school activities.

4.4 The core strategic management of the Partnership had remained stable and the Partnership had benefited from the ‘continuity of care’ provided by the PDM, the Director of Sport and the LEA Officer, as well as from long-standing links with the Sport England Officer, all of whom felt they had a good and mutually beneficial working relationship. There was one school in the Partnership, which had failed to recruit an SSCo, but every effort was being made to maintain the school’s links with the Partnership.

5.0 Evaluation of the establishment of the partnership

The Director of Sport at the hub school wrote the original bid in collaboration with the PE and Sports Advisor for the LEA, with additional input and encouragement from the Sport England Officer. The people fulfilling these roles had been in post prior to the establishment of the Partnership and were still working collaboratively several years later, both formally and informally.

This continuity had given the Partnership a very stable core, which had facilitated the success of the Partnership in a number of ways. It had enhanced both the LEAs and partnership’s abilities to deliver activities and provide opportunities effectively, through good communication and collaborative working. The depth and breadth of expertise and knowledge of the history of the Partnership had also been useful in making and revising strategic decisions, evaluation and longer term planning. The PDM’s previous experience in the primary sector was advantageous in creating strong links with the primary schools in the Partnership. All the core personnel were highly regarded by other members of the Partnership, both within the school staff and among external contacts, for example among local clubs and coaches.
5.1 The quality and appropriateness of the advice and development support given to the partnership by Sport England, Youth Sport Trust and the Big Lottery Fund

The Partnership was well supported by both the YST officer and the LEA officer, both of whom were said to be approachable and helpful. While the former had been appointed relatively recently, the latter had been involved in the Partnership since its inception and had a long-standing relationship with the school and its Director of Sport. The PDM’s main source of support was the Director of Sport. Other contacts designated as sources of support were the YST officer and the Big Lottery Fund officer, who was mentioned as providing advice specifically on matters relating to Big Lottery Fund funding. The LEA officer was perceived to be a good source of assistance with more local issues, and was able to use links with the schools development service.

5.2 The quality and appropriateness of the training provided to the partnership by BAALPE/PEAUK

5.2.1 The SSCos interviewed agreed that the training modules had been very useful; indeed, several people described them as ‘invaluable’. Participants mentioned those elements on developing schemes of work and working with a budget as being particularly helpful. The first term within the Partnership had been taken up with conducting audits within the schools in the families, which SSCos acknowledged was a necessary step, but had found frustrating as it meant that they were not able to start programme activities until this had been completed.

5.2.2 Several SSCos mentioned that they felt insufficiently prepared for working within the primary sector. There was a concern that primary teachers found the presence of secondary staff disconcerting, and could feel either that they were under inspection, or that secondary staff considered themselves to be superior. Those who had experienced such challenges had managed to allay colleagues’ concerns, but this had taken additional time to overcome. It was suggested that some training addressing issues around the divide between the two sectors and equipping SSCos (who were almost entirely experienced in the secondary rather than primary sector) with teaching methods appropriate to younger children, especially those in KS1, would be beneficial.

5.2.3 When the PDM had originally attended training sessions several of them were still under development. The training was considered to have improved and the pilot trainees’ feedback seemed to have been influential on this. The change from training courses being spread over a year to being delivered closer together over a shorter period of time was seen as a positive one. On the whole, ongoing training was considered to be useful and of good quality.
5.2.4 One PLT said that the PLT training had been particularly useful in helping her to submit an application for Activemark gold. It was also widely felt to have enhanced PLTs’ confidence in delivering PE and in enabling them to raise the profile of PE within their schools: ‘Because you have the PLT training behind you, you can say, “This is how it should be.”’

5.2.5 Another participant commented that, at first, head teachers had been uncertain what benefits membership of the partnership would bring, but that ‘now many of the PLTs have completed their training and gone back into schools with finite things to do, heads are beginning to see that they’re being given tools to work with.’

5.2.6 TOPS training was mentioned by several people as being particularly useful, and that it had been well attended and well received by other teaching colleagues.

5.2.7 The PLT interviewed who was based in a special school had had a different experience, and while finding the training useful, felt it had limited relevance to her specific circumstances. The special schools in the area had therefore recently formed their own informal family. It was seen as beneficial that the PDM had previously worked at a special school and had an understanding of the requirements of staff and students in this area. The PLT observed that she had more support than colleagues who were responsible for co-ordinating other areas of the curriculum and felt that the programme was ‘very valuable’.

5.2.8 As with the SSCos and the PDM, it was felt that the training would be better delivered in a more concentrated format. Attending modules over a longer time made some people feel that training was ‘disjointed’. All agreed that one of the most valuable aspects of the training was the opportunity to meet and share ideas and experiences with colleagues from other schools. Many felt that the programme would be improved if there were more of these opportunities. Both PLTs and SSCos said that the PDM communicated training opportunities effectively.

5.3 Effectiveness of management structure development and delivery

The PDM was widely perceived as an extremely enthusiastic and capable leader of the Partnership. Participants all found her to be approachable and helpful, and felt that they were well supported by her and other members of the Partnership. Effective communication was also considered to be a strength of both the PDM and the Partnership as a whole, with all participants feeling that they had sufficient contact and received adequate and timely information on a range of subjects. As with the PDM, the Director of Sport was also highly regarded among schools, clubs and the LEA and Local Authority Sports Development. The relationship between these parts of the partnership was long established and considered to be mutually beneficial.
5.4 The recruitment, staffing and teacher release arrangements of the Partnership Development Manager, School Sport Coordinators and Primary Link Teachers

In the School Sport Coordinators Report for 2001-2002 it was stated that ‘The inability to fully staff the scheme to date has been a major factor, [in making progress towards the ‘Raising Standards’ objective] as has the mobility of PLTs. It is hoped that the hard work and range of strategies used to address this will bear fruit next year as we hope to be fully staffed.’

Since at the time of interview, almost 12 months later, most participants were not reporting recruitment or retention as being problematic, it would seem that the Partnership’s efforts in this area had been successful.

Staff release had occasionally proved difficult, especially for smaller schools, but all SSCos had recently moved to having the same two core days each week to allow them to attend group meetings and training more easily. It was widely acknowledged that one of the best aspects of the programme was the provision of funded time, enabling the payment of supply staff to cover for PLTs and SSCos to attend training and work on programme related activities. As one respondent said: ‘Unlike other initiatives that have hit schools recently, the funded time means that people have been using their time to talk about the role of PE in school, and this has given it a real thrust and edge.’

Indications were that head teachers were generally supportive of the Partnership; especially in the primary sector, and in some cases the role of PLT was being performed by primary head teachers. The heads of secondary schools were less aware of specific benefits of the Partnership, but were supportive of their PE departments and SSCos’ efforts.

6.0 Evaluation of the operation of the Partnership

6.1 What data does the partnership collect and how is performance information used within the partnership

The Partnership provided the Big Lottery Fund officer with annual monitoring reports on beneficiary numbers and learning outcomes achieved. Expenditure was reported on claim forms and in the annual reports. The Partnership also submitted year-end reports to Sport England on progress towards the targets linked to the objectives stated above in Section 4.0.
Schools also submitted PESSCL surveys, some directly to DfES and some via the PDM, which included data on, for example, the amount of curricular PE time and the number of sports and activities offered. All schools were encouraged to keep registers of children attending OOSH provision, festivals, and inter- and intra-school competitions and events in order to establish participation levels.

Some concern was voiced that means of measuring the impact of PE had not been clearly identified. This was thought to be an area for improvement and work on assessment procedures was said to be ongoing. However, it was suggested that there was a risk of alienating the support of schools or individuals if the amount of documentation required were to increase. As one participant commented, ‘onerous paperwork takes its toll on enthusiasm’. This belief was supported by several respondents who said that the existing administrative burden was already a heavy one. Frustration was expressed that time being spent on this could be more productively spent on arranging and facilitating activities, training, etc. However, these respondents also accepted that it was necessary to monitor and record information in order to demonstrate and evaluate progress and improvement.

6.2 The amount of influence that young people have had in determining activities

Some participants said that their schools conducted pupil and/or parent surveys, some regularly, some sporadically. However, these encompassed a range of topics and there was no particular focus on PE and sports provision. Where school councils existed they were deemed an effective means of collaboration and consultation on various areas of school life.

One school gave students access to computer-assisted self-completion questionnaires about lessons, including PE lessons. This school had also participated in YST research on reasons why girls stopped participating in PE. The school had implemented changes indicated by the findings, which had included mixed gender groups for PE in Years 7, 10 and 11, and separate gender groups for Years 8 and 9, a wider range of choices in activities and better changing facilities.

All members of PE staff interviewed said that pupils felt able to approach them informally to give feedback and request additional activities. A minority of respondents suggested that to encourage suggestions for additional activities would be counter productive. In some cases this was because provision was already deemed to be at capacity, in terms of available facilities and staff, precluding further expansion.

6.3 The effectiveness of the links made with local sporting clubs and other community groupings
Clubs with links to the schools in the partnership included: basketball, tennis, cricket, netball, badminton, swimming, self-defence, table tennis and football. The hub school has particularly strong links with the local rugby, cricket and athletics clubs. Among SSCos and PLTs it was widely agreed that the partnership had been influential in creating and strengthening new and existing liaisons. The partnership had introduced a ‘Step 1, 2, 3’ programme. This was devised as a means to help children bridge the transition from attending a school-based club to a local sports club. The PDM was seen as playing an important role in facilitating this, and was frequently engaged in setting up meetings between NGBs, clubs and school representatives in order to match clubs and schools’ requirements effectively. The PDM was also a member of the board of the County Sports Partnership, which worked strategically with PDMs and National Governing Bodies’ area development officers.

6.3.1 The composition and effectiveness of advisory/steering groups/committees

The PDM was currently engaged in establishing a new Steering Group Committee, consisting of representatives from the following posts and organisations: Secondary head; Primary head; SSCo; PLT; Education Action Zone; Local Education Action Pilot (run with Healthcare Trust); Local Authority SDOs both from the town and the rural districts; PDM; Director of Sport; YST Area Officer, and PE and School Sport Development Manager (County Council).

It was envisaged that this group would meet on a termly basis. As it was still in the early stages of inception members had been asked to return to the Partnership Development Plan to see how their roles and organisations fitted within it and how they could develop it within their role. One participant anticipated that the Steering Group Committee would be an important mechanism for identifying priorities for the future. However, if this was to be the case it was suggested that the group would need to agree terms of reference and should focus on outcomes. There was concern that all members would need to understand the Partnership’s priorities, and to establish areas where the Partnership would lead, and where it would provide support.

Some participants also attended termly meetings with staff from other hub schools in the county. These included the PDMs, Directors of Sport and Sports Development Officers, the PE and School Sport Development Manager, the YST Area Officer, the Sport England Officer and representatives from the county Sports Partnership.

6.3.2 The transparency of meetings and how decisions are communicated to partners, including clubs, and primary and secondary schools
Communication seemed to be effective, and this was identified as one of the strengths of the Partnership, both by internal and external partners. The PDM communicated with the SSCos and PLTs mainly via email, but also by telephone and fax as appropriate. The PDM produced SSCo meeting minutes, which were sent to the heads of secondary schools in the Partnership, and encouraged SSCOs to send minutes of their cluster meetings both to their own head teachers and to those of the other schools in the cluster.

6.4 The effectiveness of links made with any other local and national initiatives aimed at increasing participation and standards of performance in sport by young people

The original application stated that the Partnership plans were discussed with the EAZ manager, the relevant secondary schools, Sport England, the local Sports Development Unit, the Regional Sports Development Officer, Youth Sport Trust, the Local Education Officer, the Active Schools Officer and a university in the region. The plans were designed to link into local and regional sports and sports development strategies, the LEA Active Schools (TOPS) Strategy, and to enhance, enrich and accelerating the hub school’s development and community plans.

The Partnership had been involved in delivering Step into Sport, TOPS programmes, NIKE Girls into Sport and a Gifted and Talented programme (through the hub school). The hub school’s specialist sports college status and involvement in the SSCo programme were seen to be ‘intertwined’. Work to co-ordinate efforts to meet Sports College and SSCo targets was ongoing, and objectives were examined and revised in order to avoid duplication of effort.

One SSCo had been working with the British Sport Trust on sports leadership schemes and had been accredited as an external assessor for courses. Led by this SSCo, the Partnership had also created a Primary Sports Leadership Award scheme, which was to be delivered in all the primary schools in the Partnership from September 2004.

6.5 Frequency of meetings with SSCOs and PLTs

Contact between SSCOs and the PDM occurred regularly. Some said that they saw the PDM on a weekly basis. Formal ‘cluster’ meetings where PLTs met with their SSCOs were held each term. News and issues from these meetings were fed back to the PDM at meetings with the SSCOs, which were also held termly.

The PLTs were very positive about the level of support provided by SSCOs – the level of contact described by one seemed fairly representative of those interviewed:

‘We meet once or twice per half term – more often if I need it, like when we were drawing up the schemes of work’.
However, with the expansion of the Partnership, it was suggested that ‘SSCo meetings are helpful, but the PDM tends to have a very full agenda of information giving. Perhaps we need a less full agenda with more opportunity to talk to each other and compare notes about what we’ve been doing, and share problems and successes.’

Nevertheless, it appeared that both PLTs and SSCos were generally satisfied with the frequency of formal meetings, and that further support and communication was provided through additional informal contact.

6.6 Adequacy of administrative support

The PDM shared an office with the Director of Sport and an administrator, but was responsible for the majority of the administration, including the collation of material for, and production of, the termly partnership newsletter. The PDM had the additional task of presenting two sets of accounts: one for the Partnership audit for September to August and one for the school finances for the year from April to March.

Several respondents referred to the amount of paperwork involved as one of the few negative aspects of the Partnership. It was suggested that this could be reduced, or that additional funding could be provided in order to pay for administrative support, thereby freeing staff time to concentrate their efforts in schools.

6.7 Recruitment and turnover of SSCos and PLTs

The Director of Sport said that finding SSCos had been one of the most challenging aspects of the job and that it had been tackled in various different ways. Some schools had had part-time staff who had agreed to work full-time and take on the SSCo role. One school had invited a supply teacher who worked at the school regularly to become the school’s SSCo. Other schools had shared the role between two or more staff. One ‘peripatetic’ SSCo performed the role in two different schools, but this had been problematic because ‘not having ownership has made it very difficult for the school to identify with the SSCo’s objectives’. One school had not had an SSCo since the programme started, and this role had been covered by other SSCos and the PDM.

Some respondents said that there were frequent changes to staff, in some cases relating to several female staff taking maternity leave. Nonetheless, the majority of participants said that the staffing of the Partnership remained relatively stable. However, in one school there had been a delay in appointing an SSCo. Other SSCos in the Partnership had compensated by dividing the school’s primary sector partners between themselves and the PDM and hub school staff made every effort to ensure that the school remained connected to the
partnership. It was hoped that with the appointment of a new head teacher the situation would soon be resolved.

6.8 Success of full-time SSCos or part-time PDMs (or other variations from the recommended pattern)

One SSCo interviewed had shared the role with a colleague and said that this arrangement had worked well over the last year. He had primarily been concerned with liaising with the primary schools in the cluster, which had been facilitated by his many years within the school as a head of department. His colleague had focussed on OOSH provision, within his own school and across the cluster schools, as well as more widely among schools with which there were links that existed prior to the Partnership’s inception. The SSCo said that despite a lot of email communication it was ‘still possible to feel somewhat isolated’, but anticipated that this would be improved with the introduction of core SSCo days.

7.0 Evaluation of the impact of the partnership

The following sections describe the Partnership’s performance against Performance Indicators and Policy Outcomes for the SSCo programme. The observations are based on interviewees’ personal opinions. Many respondents stated that there was little or no ‘hard evidence’ to support their impressions. For partnership members joining in Phase II it was too early to assess the extent to which specific objectives had been met. In other cases although participation, behaviour and attitudes were perceived to have improved it was not considered possible to detect how much of this had been due to partnership involvement, and how much was the result of other factors, for example a change in head teacher at the school.

All respondents felt that the Partnership was operating effectively. All were able to list a number of positive benefits and examples of good practice. When asked if there were any negative aspects to involvement in the Partnership, several respondents said that they could not identify any.

7.1 Increased participation amongst school age children, in particular girls and young women, black and ethnic minorities, disabled young people and young people living in areas of socio-economic disadvantage

7.1.1 Both curricular and extra curricular PE and sports activities were said to have increased across the Partnership. In particular, the increase of extra curricular provision was perceived to have been the major impact of the programme. One SSCo described it as having ‘expanded massively’. SSCOs and PLTs were encouraged to keep registers of
pupils attending OOSH activities and clubs in order to provide evidence of the Partnership’s impact.

7.1.2 In one school it had been decided to target girls’ participation by introducing a single sex fitness club. An indication of the success of this was thought to be demonstrated by the fact that some girls gained the confidence to attend both this and the mixed club as well. In addition, Year 10 and 11 girls were given opportunities to attend self-defence classes and rape awareness classes, which had proved very popular.

7.1.3 In a cluster where the primary schools had traditionally lacked the facilities and/or the expertise to provide many OOSH opportunities, the SSCo met with PLTs to plan multi-sports evenings. These had proved exceptionally popular, attracting 160 applicants for 120 places.

7.1.4 The head of the hub school stated that all students now received at least 2 hours curriculum PE each week and that there was an excellent attendance rate for PE (92.5%). All pupils are required to take GCSE PE and there is also a 95% participation in the house games, which are considered to be an important and integral part of school life.

7.1.5 The PDM cited the increasing success of an annual dance festival as evidence of the positive impact on participation. One school had been running an annual dance festival before the Partnership was set up, but numbers participating in it had been in decline. The Partnership had co-ordinated a joint festival between the original school and the hub school and there had been a ‘dramatic increase’ in participation levels over the three years since this change had been made. Another respondent cited the increased uptake of GCSE and A level PE and dance as further evidence of the success of this venture.

7.1.6 Pupils at a primary school had been consulted about how best to use the playground and had requested more skipping ropes and hoops, and lunch time supervisors were being involved in TOPS training to deliver games and activities at playtimes, all of which was thought to contribute to a general increase in participation in PE and sports activities.

7.1.7 One of the PLTs interviewed reported that curriculum time for KS1 pupils had increased, and that the SSCo had enabled the school to run a trampolining club and had facilitated links with a local tag rugby coach. The SSCo delivered or facilitated much of the OOSH provision, but this had mostly been maintained rather than expanded as the school was already at capacity.

7.1.8 Another PLT said that the SSCo rotated activities around the cluster so that schools could share resources and contacts more effectively. The cluster meetings had given staff access to a bank of three coaches who would visit schools and provide expertise in curriculum time. The
number of clubs available to pupils had increased, but the PLT was uncertain to what extent this was due to partnership involvement, since the school’s new management expected all staff to run clubs. This had led to an increase in OOSH provision in both sporting and non-sporting clubs, for example in gardening, cookery and science. The new head teacher was, however, ‘very appreciative of the financial implications of the SSCo programme’ and was pleased that participation was increasing.

7.1.9 A third PLT felt that the partnership had had a very positive impact on the range of OOSH activities, including football, rugby, netball, cricket, badminton, table tennis, athletics and cross country running. There had also been an impact on the quality of teaching – as a result of the PLT training she had been able to assess what equipment was needed and to order it from her budget. Participation had improved and pupils who had not brought their kit were still involved in lessons through watching and evaluating others’ performances.

7.1.10 There were three special schools within the Partnership, and another in the private sector with which the PDM also had contact. A PLT from one of the special schools said that having pupils, teachers and coaches coming in to the school was considered one of the most beneficial aspects of membership. However, OOSH participation had decreased at the school because there were ‘major transport issues’ encountered when previous funding for transport had ended. The school also had only one small hall that was used for dining at lunch times, which further constrained OOSH provision, as the space could not be used for lunchtime activities.

7.1.11 One of the secondary schools’ Board of Governors had recently agreed an increase to two hours curriculum PE from September 2004. It was suggested that this would not have been implemented as soon had it not been for the SSCo initiative. The head teacher said that the school had started from a strong position so that the impact of the programme was probably ‘less dramatic’ but that some of the observed differences ought to be attributed to the Partnership.

7.1.12 An SSCo commented that collecting data for a Sportsmark application had helped to track student participation in curriculum time and outside school hours. There had been increased participation over time, but the SSCo said that it was very difficult to pinpoint the causes of this. However, he was able to cite an example of a new table tennis club that had not existed before the school entered the SSCo programme, and said that this had increased girls’ participation in OOSH PE.

7.1.13 Another respondent said that involvement in the Partnership had brought about ‘a more dynamic curriculum’ within the hub school, for example through leadership activities in the community, and an increased cross-curricular approach to PE which had enhanced pupils’ engagement in other subjects, including ICT, geography and biology.
There had also been an increase in the number of students interested in pursuing careers in the leisure industry and sports science.

7.1.14 There were very few pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools. Interviewees said that every effort was made to address and support and requirements these students had. The vast majority of pupils did not come from an ethnic minority background, and respondents considered those who did come from an ethnic minority background to be well integrated within school, and to be afforded equal opportunities in terms of physical activity. It was also suggested that it was not appropriate to emphasise the importance of increasing only girls’ participation, as there were some activities where boys were under-represented, for example dance and gymnastics.

7.2 Improved standards of performance by children across a range of sports

7.2.1 Of the schools represented in the interviews, some had a long-standing record of competing in local and regional events, especially those that had been included in Phase I of the Partnership. In the Phase II schools it was too early to establish a definite increase in the number of pupils representing their school, county or region in competitions, but this was also attributed to problems with transport and the lack of staff available to support teams for additional sports.

7.2.2 Evidence of the improvement in standards and a raising of the profile of PE within the Partnership were given in terms of external assessments. Of the 10 senior schools in the Partnership, nine had achieved Sportsmark gold, one with distinction. Among the primary schools, several had achieved Activemark, two had been awarded Activemark gold, and several others were applying. Respondents stated that the application process had required the collection of participation data, and the Partnership managers anticipated that PESSCL survey data would be useful in monitoring this and providing evidence of increased numbers of pupils competing at local, regional and national levels across the partnership schools. Methods of assessment of performance were also under discussion among various members of the Steering Group Committee.

7.2.3 Pupils from the hub school had recently won a national football competition, a county golf championship, several athletics events and the school was very well represented at a regional sports awards ceremony. This had also been attended by another secondary school that had as many students competing at higher levels as the hub school, despite not being a specialist sports college. A respondent from this school suggested that the additional involvement with the sports college that had come through the SSCo programme had helped to bring other schools’ sporting performance up to a similar level.
7.2.4 At the hub school the increase in the number of school houses and additional emphasis on inter-house games had meant that more pupils were competing. In inter-house cricket, each house had one team per year group, which meant that over two years 276 students would have participated. Some clubs were now able to field B teams in some sports, which meant that children with a wider range of abilities had been able to compete.

7.2.5 A respondent from a Phase II primary school reported that ‘involvement in the Partnership has increased PE activity in the competitive arena’. The cluster meetings were seen as an effective forum for organising inter-school competitions. During the first year of involvement in the Partnership an inter-school athletics event that had lapsed had been re-instigated, and schools had also attended a football tournament. An SSCo who had forged strong links with a women’s football club gave a detailed account of how this had translated into increased opportunities for girls to participate and compete.

7.2.6 Another SSCo said that the quality and number of pupils competing at a local level in table tennis had increased and that there are some students competing at national level, which had encouraged others to participate. GCSE and A level PE take up had increased and grades had improved over the last three years, which was partly attributed to the involvement of external coaches facilitated by the Partnership. This participant said that more robust evidence might be available in future years when students currently in Year 8 went on to do GCSE PE, as they would have benefited from the SSCo programme throughout their secondary education.

7.2.7 One of the hub school’s ‘feeder’ primary schools had always had a strong sporting tradition, but respondents felt that this had been further strengthened through the Partnership. This had facilitated greater access to a variety of sporting events and pupils had had the opportunity to prepare for the annual town sports event using the hub school’s facilities.

7.3 Improved motivation, attitude and self-esteem resulting in increased personal and social development and in aspects of their school life

7.3.1 The evidence given for the Partnership’s success in this area was anecdotal. Where respondents did say that there had been an improvement this tended to be evidenced through examples of individual pupils who were deemed to have benefited from involvement with the activities related to the programme.

7.3.2 All interviewees expressed the opinion that participation in sport and physical activity was beneficial to pupils’ development. Respondents indicated that where head teachers held this belief it could be hugely influential on the importance given to PE within the schools’ overall development strategy. This also affected the schools’ involvement in,
and enthusiasm for, partnership activity. All of the head teachers interviewed were very supportive of the programme, and felt that it had had a positive effect on pupils through an increase in opportunities to participate. One head teacher expressed the view that ‘sport improves standards, teamwork, discipline, self-awareness and loyalty.’ Another suggested that sporting success was good for children’s self esteem and could have a ‘knock on effect’ on other areas of the curriculum.

7.3.3 One SSCo cited the example of a student who had been targeted for attending a new swimming course by staff because of a previous record of exclusions. The student completed the course and had not been excluded since, which suggested an improvement in behaviour and attitude. This SSCo also reported that participation in OOSH activities was enabling some students to experience a sense of achievement that they might not have encountered in their academic career. It was suggested that this had improved pupils’ self esteem and had contributed to a decrease in aggressive and confrontational behaviour.

7.3.4 The PDM was aware of examples of specific pupils whose behaviour and attitudes had improved and stated that exclusion rates had fallen, but could not necessarily attribute this to partnership work. This opinion was shared by an SSCo who said that it could not be inferred that a general improvement in behaviour and attitudes in PE was solely due to the Partnership as there were ‘too many other initiatives and factors’ to be taken into account, but that it might have affected some individual cases.

7.3.5 However, it was widely agreed that the Partnership’s focus on leadership awards was a very important and successful part of its activities. The benefits to participants included improving their self-discipline, teamwork, self-awareness and confidence levels, as enabling them to contribute to the wider community, both within schools and externally through voluntary work. The SSCo with particular responsibility for supporting leadership activities was highly commended for her work in this area.

7.3.6 Students who undertook the Leadership Awards schemes assisted staff with PE lessons, organised and ran sports events, and visited primary schools to assist and run PE lessons (all under teacher supervision). Staff valued the additional support and said that primary school pupils appeared to enjoy the contact with senior school pupils, and vice versa.

7.4 Increased numbers of qualified and active coaches, leaders and officials in secondary schools, local primary schools and local sports clubs/facilities

7.4.1 Students who had completed the JSLA scheme could then pursue the CSLA course in the sixth form, which in turn led to further work in the
community, with some pupils going on to acquire coaching qualifications. This was seen as very important in combating a widely perceived shortage of qualified coaches in the area, which was mentioned by several participants as a potential barrier to increasing and enhancing sporting participation and competition in the area.

7.4.2 One SSCo reported an increase in access to coaching, and also in the number of people being supported and encouraged to acquire formal coaching qualifications. Another respondent said that an increasing number of NGBs were beginning to work with the Partnership, and that awareness was growing on both sides. The PDM was identified as providing a useful point of contact for schools to gain access to coaches, clubs and NGBs, as well as co-ordinating schools' needs and interest from outside bodies. This had enabled links to be forged in a constructive and sustainable way. Coaching had been provided in sports such as cricket, table tennis, badminton, trampolining, swimming, rugby, football, basketball, self defence, netball and hockey.
APPENDIX A

Research Methods

A1.1 Initial contact was made with the Partnership Development Manager by telephone. The final selection of SSCos, PLTs, parents, coaches and local club officers was made in consultation with the PDM who liaised with respondents and arranged times and venues for the face-to-face interviews. These were conducted during three visits, in July, August and September 2004, and the remaining participants were interviewed by telephone in August and October 2004. All of the interviews were recorded and notes were taken.

A1.2 In addition to the interviews, information was obtained from documentation pertaining to the partnership, including:

- The School Sport Co-ordinator bid document;
- The School Sport Coordinators Year End Reports (SSC5) for Years 1 & 2;
- The School Long Term Development Plan; and

A1.3 The table below gives details of the number of interviews conducted and the roles of those interviewed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDM</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSCos</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLTs</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary Heads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Heads</td>
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<td>Director of PE and Sport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Lottery Fund Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>LA sports dev officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>YST area officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE Active Schools Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEA Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local sports clubs/assoc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the interviews were conducted between 14 July and 22 October. Nineteen were conducted face-to-face and the remaining six were telephone interviews. One coach agreed to be interviewed but could not be contacted again either by telephone or email. Another coach and two other parents could not be contacted at any of the telephone numbers supplied by the PDM.