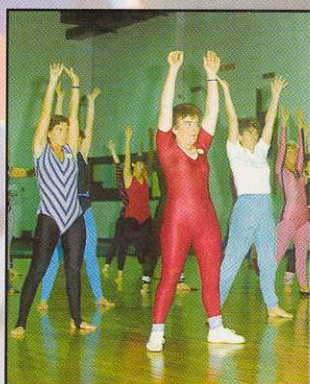
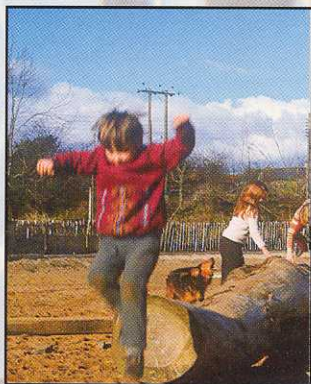




**SPORTS  
COUNCIL**  
NORTHERN  
IRELAND

## **Developing Local Sports Development Strategies**





## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### INTRODUCTION

Sports development is a simple process. It is about the planning, co-ordination and management of human and other resources in each of the sectors and professions with a role to play in sports provision.

There are various definitions of sports development. It is a term used to describe the process of implementing positive change in methods of and attitudes to sports provision. One common definition describes it as a 'process whereby opportunities, processes, systems and structures are set up to enable and encourage people to take part in sport for recreation or to improve their level of performance to whatever level they desire'.

In plain language it is about continually improving the way that sport is provided (quality) and extending the range of people for whom it is provided (quantity).

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### WHAT

— *is sports development?*

## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### CONTEXT

Sports development is becoming recognised as a key role of the District Council. During the last ten years the emphasis of local authority provision has changed. District Councils are increasingly seen as enablers rather than always the direct providers of sport and recreational opportunity. The raised profile of sports development as a defined function has contributed to this change in perceptions about the way that public authorities work in sport.

Placed at the centre of a local sporting network the District Council will be the key to the planned provision of a range of sporting activity suitable to meet the needs of participants at all levels.

#### Example: Antrim Borough Council: Schools Link

This is a good example of a District Council 'enabling' sports development via a partnership approach with other agencies. Antrim Borough Council has, through its Local Sports Advisory Council, funded the appointment of an incentive position at Antrim High School. The incentive holder acts as a Co-ordinator and manages the relationship with the voluntary sports sector. This ensures that young people get the best possible chance of making effective contacts and are, therefore, enabled to continue participation in their chosen sport.

This handbook, and the others that accompany the strategy, provide District Council managers with a practical guide to producing a sports development strategy.

Like the guide to District Sport and Recreation Strategies it is an outline framework. It is designed both to enable an SDO or facility manager to plan for specific aspects of provision and to be used as a guide to the planning of overall departmental operation. The emphasis is put on creation and maintenance of clearly identifiable 'pathways' and the removal of barriers to participation and improvement in sport.

### WHO

— *should be involved in sports development?*

- District Councils
- GBs of Sport
- schools
- sports clubs

### Practical guidance

*Primary emphasis; on clearly identifiable 'pathways'*



THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

WHY HAVE A SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY?

District Councils must be clear and realistic about their objectives in the sports development process and the 'route' via which those objectives are to be achieved. These must be clearly mapped out and the result of this process of 'route-planning' is the strategy.

There is little point in a District Council researching and producing a strategy if it sees its role simply as that of a direct service provider, similarly if its aim is to 'compete' with the voluntary sector or even with private sector providers it is unlikely to be effective in sports development. A major function of the contemporary public authority is to act as a catalyst or 'enabler' – by acting in whatever way is necessary to ensure services are provided by a range of agencies and not just by the District Council.

The strategy should clarify how sports development processes and practices are to be introduced into both your organisation and your local area. It is useful, not only as a guide to the Council's own work but also because it clearly states how you intend to work with other agencies.

Consultation with and the direct involvement of partner agencies in the planning process and in the production of the strategy will mean that it becomes something in which they have a stake and with which they can identify. Through the strategy they must be able to clearly see the part they will play in developing sport in your area.

Example: Craigavon Borough Council: Local Strategy

Craigavon produced a strategy in 1995 which was the result of work by a partnership. This partnership included the Education and Library Board, the Health Board, and Local Sports Advisory Council as well as the Borough Council, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland, and the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland. All these agencies were involved in developing the Strategy which was published as the partnerships' (as opposed to the Borough Council's) Strategy. This not only gave different agencies an opportunity to be involved but also generated a wide-spread commitment to Craigavon's Strategy.

WHY

— have a strategy?

District Council's role

Clarification

Consultation

## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### BENEFITS OF HAVING A STRATEGY

It provides sound guidance for future policies and action programmes.

It will improve co-operation between agencies involved in provision.

*Benefits all agencies involved*

*Facilitates teamwork*

#### Strabane District Council: Mini Sport Programme

Strabane District Council, through their Sports Development Officer, ran a club development package which provided initial training, supported club-based coaching, and then provided a short period of programme activity designed to develop mini-sport within a number of local Strabane clubs. This training and demonstration approach ensured that several of the clubs maintained programmes after the withdrawal of Strabane District Council's financial support.

*Engenders feelings of ownership*

*Means more and better coaching*

People from all aspects and levels of sport can contribute to the strategy production process.

Coaching and training opportunities will be increased and improved as a result of a co-ordinated partnership approach to sports provision.

#### Lostock School: Trafford

In this case the PE teacher has involved the local professional basketball team in provision of after school and Saturday morning coaching for pupils at the school in return for which the club makes use of the facilities later in the evening.

*Improves schools provision*

Schools will be able to offer pupils a chance to progress in sport through good coaching opportunities and structured links with sport in the 'outside world'.

#### Carrickfergus Cricket Club: Schools Programme

Carrickfergus Cricket Club pay their professional to spend the first half of the summer coaching in local schools. Young people involved are then invited to join the club, which runs teams at a variety of age group levels and get the opportunity to receive coaching, practice and play throughout the summer holidays.



THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

District Councils will start to take a pro-active instead of a reactive approach to service provision.

*Leads to pro-active District Council provision*

Community Clubs: Birmingham City Council
In this example the local authority has 'handed over' certain centres to clubs for given evenings. So instead of being the passive recipient of casual and other bookings the centre is, for that evening, geared to a developmental programme all geared to provision in the same sport. Such an evening would typically involve after school coaching opportunities for young people, early evening coaching for beginners, further coaching for improvers and then competitive opportunities for better players.

Governing Bodies of Sport will benefit from greater integration between national and local work.

*Improves integration and co-ordination*

Sports clubs will benefit from the construction of effective 'feeder' mechanisms from schools, District Council run provision etc.

*Helps clubs recruit young people*

Kiltonga Squash Club
Here the squash club recruits directly from an introductory coaching course run as part of the sports centre's summer activity programme. The intensive one week course is followed by a presentation evening at which the young people who have attended the course are introduced to the members of the club responsible for coaching juniors and organising junior competition. In the first year following a course attended by 19 young people 14 joined, and have stayed with, the club.

## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### WHAT IS IT?

Your strategy is the statement outlining what your organisation along with existing and potential partners intends to do over a given time and within the limits of its own ability to influence events and partners agencies. A good strategy will, as its core, outline the way in which the District Council will aim to improve/increase sporting opportunities. It should clearly illustrate how it will go about providing, altering and enhancing provision to assist local people to start in, participate, improve, perform and excel in sport.

### HOW IS ONE PRODUCED?

The stages in the strategy production process vary in length and complexity. The Sports Council for Northern Ireland working with District Councils in the Province has identified and agreed a planning method which provides a way forward. It has seven distinct stages:

- Stage 1: Preparing the brief
- Stage 2: Review current policies and practices
- Stage 3: Consider external influences
- Stage 4: Establish your 'mission statement'
- Stage 5: Identify key issues
- Stage 6: Prepare policies and initiate action
- Stage 7: Review achievement and the strategy

Possible activities within each of these stages, and some of the issues likely to emerge when developing strategies, are explored in the Sports Council for Northern Ireland's publication 'A Guide to District Sport and Recreation Strategies'. This is available from the Council at:

House of Sport  
Upper Malone Road  
BELFAST  
BT9 5LA  
Tel No: 01232 381222

### WHAT

— is a strategy?

*Strategy stages*

## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### STAGE 1: PREPARING THE BRIEF

It is important to map out the range of tasks that the production of your strategy will involve. You should have a clear idea about what needs to be done, who is to do it and the time-frame within which particular aspects of the work must be completed.

The Brief, as well as planning the production process, is a major element in helping to establish the possible shape of the Strategy, and in winning support for the Strategy process. The brief should certainly identify:

Process	Shape	Programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Borough Council or community owned</li><li>• Key players</li><li>• Consultation activity</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aims and objectives</li><li>• Possible Mission Statement</li><li>• Possible key issues</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research required</li><li>• Who does what and when</li><li>• Costs and time scales</li></ul>

A good brief will require the approval and support of senior officers, Council committees, and possibly other local agencies such as the Education and Library Board and the Local Sports Advisory Council and others. A well prepared brief can contribute significantly to winning the support of such partners.

*Plan the strategy  
production process*



## STAGE 2: REVIEW AND RESEARCH

This stage is, in effect about assessing 'where we are now'. You must review current levels of activity and provision in your area. You should identify which sports, which 'target groups' or which geographical areas you intend to concentrate (focus) on, what is being done, where, by whom and to what effect. Without this knowledge of the present situation planning for development, achieving change and assessing the progress you have made will be difficult.

### Foundation: Schools

You should seek to establish the prevailing attitudes towards the provision and development of sporting opportunity for young people in local schools and clubs. Talk to head and classroom teachers, PE staff, governors etc to gauge the extent to which sport is, or could be, made to be a priority.

To research the situation you might wish to ask a number of the following questions;

### AT FOUNDATION LEVEL

- 1 Are opportunities for 'entry' into your chosen (focus) sports built into the programmes of primary schools in your area?
- 2 Do teachers at each local primary school have the knowledge necessary to deliver a broad introductory programme in sport?
- 3 Do schools currently have the equipment and appropriate space to provide introductory programmes in particular sports? Which schools have what?
- 4 What extracurricular schools based sporting opportunities are currently available to over 8s in schools in your area? Which sports are currently being catered for?
- 5 What 'out of school' provision is available via clubs, sports centres, private sports organisations etc for 8 year olds, 9 year olds, 10 year olds etc in your area?
- 6 Is there curriculum based activity for which little or no provision exists outside the school in your area?

*Where are we now?*

*Questions to ask:  
Foundation*

## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### AT PARTICIPATION LEVEL

- 1 Given the clubs and facilities that exist in your area in which sports currently being provided at primary and secondary school level is it realistic to expect partner agencies to provide opportunities for participation or progression?
- 2 Do sports clubs in your district actively manage links with local primary and secondary schools?
- 3 Is there a mechanism via which teachers/schools staff are consulted about ways in which pathways into clubs and facility based sport can be created?
- 4 What provision is being made for specified target groups in your area?
- 5 Are there adequate opportunities for people simply to take part in sport for recreational/health/social purposes in your area?
- 6 How well are such opportunities publicised and promoted...what percentage of the local population actually use leisure facilities/take part in District Council run activities in the area?
- 7 To what extent has linkage between participation and performance based opportunities provided in the area been developed?

### AT PERFORMANCE LEVEL

- 1 Have you determined the sports in which it will be realistic to expect to be able to provide opportunities for development of performance and possibly excellence?
- 2 Has your District Council designated sports upon which it is to focus attention on provision of training and competitive opportunities for young people to participate and excel?
- 3 Is there a system or would it be feasible to develop a system for the identification and support of performers within school curriculum time?
- 4 How effectively are clubs and schools working together to ensure that talented young people are given clear opportunities to develop their levels of performance in particular sports?
- 5 Are the numbers and levels of coaches available in specific sports in your area sufficient to enable young people to receive appropriate instruction at the relevant level of performance?
- 6 Are there any areas for potential co-operation with adjacent Councils? If you run a performance school open to your neighbour, will they run a coach training programme open to you?

*Questions to ask:  
Participation*

*Questions to ask:  
Performance*



## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### STAGE 3: EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

You must be as well informed as is possible about 'external' issues. What are the external issues that will affect your ability to deliver the strategy?

#### Example: Education

In the context of developing sport for young people you will need to know about current and pending changes in Education (local management of schools, national curriculum etc), you will need to be aware of the workload that teachers are currently asked to take on. You will also need to make it your business to know something about the voluntary sports sector and to be able to assess the current position from a realistic and not an idealistic perspective.

Among the external issues which will impact upon your strategy are CCT which has had a significant impact in many English local authorities. The Childrens Act which will shortly be coming into force in Northern Ireland will also influence ways in which certain elements of service provision can be managed as will the reaction to the Martin Huston case. Ongoing changes in education will also need to be considered.

*External issues for consideration*

### STAGE 4: ESTABLISHING THE MISSION STATEMENT

It is very important, having conducted your research, evaluated your present position and consulted with existing and potential partners, that you clarify exactly what your District Council is prepared and is able to do. This process of analysing 'what business we are in' will result in your 'mission statement' the establishment of realistic parameters for the remainder of the strategy production and implementation exercise.

*'What business are we in?'*

#### Antrim Borough Council Strategic Plan

Antrim Borough Council and its partners agreed the following Mission Statement:

"Our aim is to improve levels of environment, health, fitness and achievement through the highest possible participation in sport and exercise'.

This Mission was, in turn, developed through the application of work programmes relating to the key issues of participation, opportunity, human physical and financial resources, information and consultation.

## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### STAGE 5: IDENTIFICATION OF KEY ISSUES

#### Key Issues

Once you have established the starting position (your position statement) you will need to establish the key issues; to set objectives and targets, not simply for your organisation but also for the agencies with which you expect to work to achieve them. Your objectives will relate to the key issues that are central to your strategy. They might therefore be;

#### FOUNDATION

- 1 Teachers current skill levels and the extent to which INSET/pre-entry training can be used to develop these sports skills.
- 2 The need for development and promotion of 'mini-games' in a number of (chosen) sports to enable them to be effectively taught and developed with the limited time, space and equipment available.
- 3 The provision of non-schools based introductory opportunities in certain sports in the area.

#### PARTICIPATION

- 1 The need for a strong and co-ordinated network of agencies to deliver the process.
- 2 The need to address the mis-match between the sports being taught in schools and the opportunities provided outside of school to participate.
- 3 The need to 'gear up' sports clubs in the area to receive and work with young people.

#### PERFORMANCE

- 1 The need to develop a system for talent identification.
- 2 The need to build provision for free/subsidised training opportunities for talented people in the area into concessionary user schemes.
- 3 The shortage of adequately qualified/experienced coaches in particular sports.



## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### STAGE 6: ADOPTING POLICIES AND TAKING ACTION

The next stage is to put the issues raised into some form of priority order and outline exactly how you intend to go about addressing them. You might, for example, choose some of the following examples to prioritise in your strategy document:

*Policies and action plans*

#### FOUNDATION

1 **Key Issue:**

The provision of non-schools based introductory opportunities in certain sports in the area.

2 **Policy:**

To, in a given number of sports, provide a core introduction via District Council and club based programmes.

3 **Action:**

- Decide on the sports to be offered.
- Approach potential partner agencies/centre managers within District Council facilities.
- Appoint a given individual/committee of interested groups to oversee the development of the scheme.
- Set up initial coach training/refresher courses for coaches re introducing newcomers to the sport/training young people.
- Ensure that appropriate equipment is available.
- Promote and publicise the availability of the programme via schools.
- Operate a given number of programmes, evaluate success and proceed with scheme on basis of the lessons learnt.
- Appoint a given individual/committee of interested groups to oversee the development of the scheme.

#### PARTICIPATION

1 **Key Issue:**

The need for a strong and co-ordinated network of agencies to deliver the process.

2 **Policy:**

To develop and strengthen the network of agencies via which participation opportunities can be provided in the area.

3 **Action:**

- Establish contact with and assess all potentially appropriate local sports organisations with a view to establishing which of them;
  - currently offer participation opportunities to young people in the District.

## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- the quality and effectiveness with which those participation opportunities are being provided.
- b) Based upon this assessment to plan a programme which builds on existing strengths and works on present weaknesses.
- c) Make decisions about sports in which progression is simply impractical/not achievable in the short to medium term.
- d) Provide training for administrators, coaches etc.
- e) Work with clubs, centre managers and other providers to develop their strengths.
- f) Appoint a local Co-ordinator (perhaps via the Local Sports Advisory Council).
- g) Develop coaching skills in areas where they are needed.

### Ballymoney Borough Council: Youth Sport Advisory Group

Ballymoney have established a Youth Sport Action group. This Group, who are managed by a local Youth Sport Manager (in this case, the local Leisure Centre manager), comprises representatives of all agencies with an interest in youth sport. This includes local Youth Sport clubs, the District Council, local schools, the Education and Library Board, and local training providers with an interest in coach education. The forum has helped enormously in focusing effort and co-ordinating activity in the area of youth sport.

## PERFORMANCE

### 1 Key Issue:

The need to build provision for free/subsidised training opportunities for talented people in the area into concessionary user schemes.

### 2 Policy:

To introduce a 'performance' element into the District Council leisure card scheme.

### 3 Action:

- a) Decide upon the levels of achievement that people will need to have reached to be eligible for the scheme.
- b) Research the number of people who will benefit from the scheme dependent upon the level of achievement at which performance level 'cut off points' are set.
- c) Following that research to determine the range within which the actual and the 'opportunity' costs of a scheme will fall.
- d) Plan the scheme with centre managers and representatives of local sport (the LSAC etc).
- e) Publicise the scheme and link provision to local sports clubs.
- f) Implement the scheme.



## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### STAGE 7: MONITORING & EVALUATION

Measuring your progress and evaluating achievement is essential to ensure that you 'stay on track'. You must critically review your work on a regular basis. Sports development is an area of work that necessitates a flexible approach to the attainment of tightly defined objectives. A schedule based upon the following would constitute good practice:

- 1 Quarterly work review; to check on progress and assess your response to new issues and problems that have arisen.
- 2 Six monthly review looking at overall progress across the breadth of work that you are covering.
- 3 Annual review; evaluating the achievements of the programme in conjunction with partner agencies and other specialists such as the Sports Council.

### CONCLUSIONS

Sports development is the key to co-ordinated delivery of sport at local level. The effective SDO or officer responsible for developmental work will quickly, but in a planned and organised way, start to build interlocking networks via which clear, continuum based pathways can be established. Once created these pathways need to be maintained and improved so that as the sports development programme progresses and linkage between the agencies involves strengthens the chances of young people missing the boat in terms of accessing opportunity to enter, participate, perform and excel in their chosen sport decline.

When preparing and writing your strategy you should refer to the range of policy documents produced by the Sports Council for Northern Ireland. Also useful is the Longmans Guide; 'Practical Sports Development' which contains details about both general and specific aspects of sports development and guidance on producing strategies, work programming, monitoring and evaluation methods etc.

*Assess progress and make changes to your strategy*

### THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM



**Foundation** – young people acquiring basic movement skills to provide a foundation for future participation in the sports of their choice.

**Participation** – the pursuit of activity for reasons of enjoyment, fitness, social contract, or sport for its own sake.

**Performance** – participation motivated by the desire to get better.

**Excellence** – achieved by those with the interest and ability to achieve publicly measured levels of performance.



## THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

### FURTHER READING

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(North West) 1987.

Sports Council Research Unit:  
Staff Health Issues and Fitness  
Training Scheme (SHIFTS).

### USEFUL ADDRESSES

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