

Sport England

Evaluation of Satellite Clubs: FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1.0 Introduction

In April 2014, Substance began a two-year evaluation of the satellite club initiative on behalf of Sport England. This is an executive summary of the final report from the research.

The satellite club initiative was launched by Sport England in 2013 with the aim of creating 5,000 new outposts or extensions of community sports clubs at a range of convenient sites targeted at young people aged 11-25. With support from delivery partners including National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) and the Premier League Charitable Fund (PLCF), the initiative has focused on creating a 'bridge' between school and community sport for 300,000 participants, thereby decreasing young people's likelihood of dropping out from sport as they leave formal education.

The objectives of the satellite club initiative have been influenced strongly by Sport England's increasing strategic concern with affecting behaviour change amongst young people and other groups. Culminating in the publication of its new strategy for 2016-21 – *Towards and Active Nation*¹ – Sport England is increasingly focused on understanding the factors that influence demand for (as well as supply of) sport amongst different population groups.

In this context, the satellite club initiative has developed as a strategic attempt to:

1. Intervene in young people's experience of sport at a crucial period when they are at risk of drifting away from regular sport participation (thereby helping people to develop a sustainable sporting habit)
2. Understand and respond to the specific demands for sport amongst young people
3. Shape the way in which sport providers tailor their offers to meet these demands
4. Ensure there are sustainable (and desirable) opportunities for participants to play sport at all stages of their lives

The objectives of this research project have been to measure and understand the impact of satellite clubs on the number of young people regularly participating in sport; to understand the sustainability of these impacts; to investigate what is driving impact; and to understand the contributions and value provided by different delivery partners. Based on a range of quantitative and qualitative data, the key aims of this report are to:

1. Measure if the satellite club initiative has been able to meet its key output targets (in relation to the numbers of clubs established and the numbers of participants attracted).
2. Determine the different types of young people who have been attracted to satellite clubs (in terms of their demographic profile and their previous experience of, and relationship with, sport).
3. Understand the impact of satellite clubs on participants in terms of both their relationship with sport and their frequency of engagement.

¹ Sport England (2016) *Towards an Active Nation: Strategy 2016-21* (London: Sport England)

4. Establish a range of key success factors that can influence satellite clubs in the next stage of their development.

2.0 Headline achievements

As of the end of the 2015/16 financial year:²

- 9,277 new satellite clubs have been created
- 417,318 participants have attended

KEY MESSAGE: Close to double the number of satellite clubs that were originally commissioned by Sport England have been created over the past three years, whilst the target number of participants to be engaged has been surpassed by over 100,000.

Key statistics from the first three years of the initiative include:

Facility types

- 72% of satellite clubs have been located in secondary schools
- 5% have been located in FE colleges (targeting older groups of young people)
- The remainder have been located in other educational settings and a range of community and specialist facilities

Club types

- 15% of clubs (1,411) have been targeted specifically at young women
- 5% of clubs (504) have targeted at engaging young people with disabilities

Location

- Satellite clubs have been established in every region of England since 2013.
- All regions account for between 16% and 8% of satellite clubs, except for the North East which hosts 6% of clubs. The smaller number of clubs in this region is reflective of the proportion of English schools and colleges that are located in the North East.

Sports

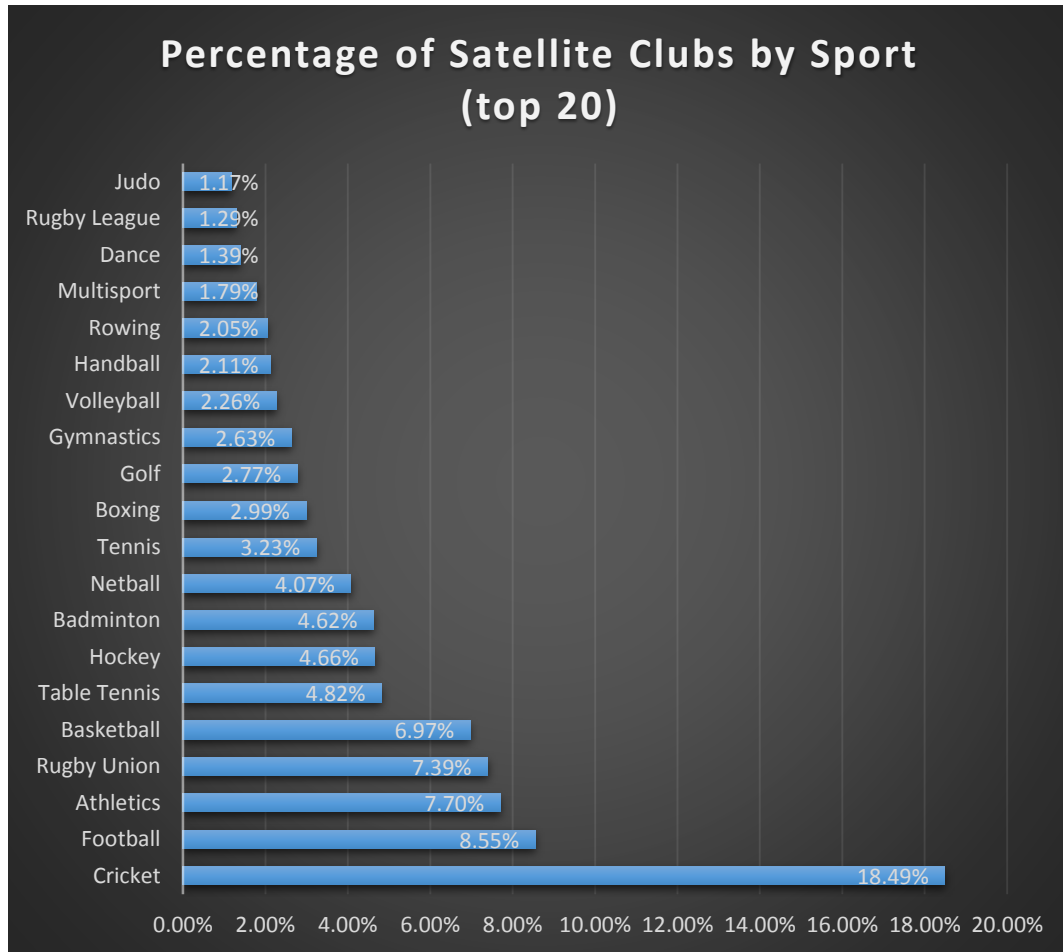
Over 50 different sports have been delivered across satellite clubs. The most frequently used sports have been:

- Cricket (18% of all clubs)³
- Football (9%)
- Athletics (8%)
- Rugby Union (7%)
- Basketball (7%)

² All data quoted in this section of the report is taken from the satellite club data portal – an online management tool used by CSPs, NGBs, the Premier League Charitable Fund and other partners to report against their key performance indicators.

³ The majority of cricket satellite clubs are being delivered through Sport England's investment into the Chance to Shine schools programme which is focused on creating at least 1,250 satellite clubs targeted at young people aged between 11-18.

- Table Tennis (5%)
- Hockey (5%)
- Badminton (5%)
- Netball (4%)



3.0 Satellite club participants – profiles, motivations and experiences

This research project included the first national survey of participants attending satellite clubs. Run at two points during 2015, the survey presented the first opportunity to understand the profiles, motivations and experiences of young people attending satellite clubs. More specifically, the survey enabled the research team to build evidence in relation to:

1. The demographic make-up of participants
2. The broader relationships participants have with venues hosting satellite clubs
3. Participants' experiences of and attitudes towards sport prior to attending satellite clubs
4. Participants' motivations for attending

Demographic profile

- **Age** - over two-thirds of participants (69%) are aged between 11 and 15
- **Gender** – around 52% of satellite club participants are male, with 47% female (the remainder are unknown)
- **Ethnicity** – around 20% of participants are from black and minority ethnic groups
- **Education and employment status** – 83% of participants are in school, whilst 6% are in further education and another 6% are in employment (the remainder are unknown)
- **Disability** – 8% of participants report having a disability or a long-term limiting illness

KEY MESSAGE: Satellite clubs have engaged a representative cross-section of young people in England and have enjoyed particular success in engaging groups that are traditionally under-represented in terms of sports participation.

Participants' relationships with satellite club venues

- 71% of survey respondents stated they attend a satellite club located on a primary, middle or secondary school site
- 58% said they attend (or used to attend) school/college at the site hosting their satellite club
- 20% said they 'don't have any other relationship' with the venue hosting their satellite club
- The remainder said they had another relationship with the venue hosting their satellite clubs, ranging from watching sport to attending other services there.

KEY MESSAGE: Satellite clubs have been successful in engaging young people from across local communities, rather than just from the student body associated with host venue.

Participants' prior relationships with sport

32% of respondents described themselves as 'not active at all', 'sometimes active' or 'quite active' (all doing sport or exercise once a week or less) prior to joining a satellite club

On the question of playing sport outside of school/college, 51% said they were playing five times a month or less (or around once a week)

50% said that they were not currently playing competitive sport or for a competitive sports club

KEY MESSAGE: Satellite clubs are proving successful in attracting a significant number of participants who were either previously doing no – or very little – non-curriculum sport. These young people can be considered to be at risk of drop out from sport as they are not accessing multiple sporting opportunities from multiple providers.

Participants' prior attitudes towards sport

Around half of respondents indicated that, whilst they are positive about sport, they do not engage regularly because either:

- They struggle to find places/opportunities to play
- There are lots of other things they are interested in too

Asked to comment on the influences that motivated them to play sport prior to attending a satellite club

- 94% said 'whether it is fun' was very important/important
- 87% said 'if coaches/staff are supportive'
- 85% said 'having the free available time to do it'

KEY MESSAGE: Satellite clubs have been broadly successful in engaging young people who like sport, but who also have a series of barriers (in terms of available opportunities and lifestyle) that have prevented them from engaging regularly. Many participants arrive at satellite clubs looking for fun, engaging and supportive environments; sessions that are timed conveniently and are hosted in good facilities; and provision that is affordable.

Participants' motivations for attending satellite clubs

- Over 90% of participants said the sport being offered was very important/important in motivating them to attend a satellite club
- Sessions being free or affordable was cited as very important/important by 66%
- Sessions being conveniently located was cited as very important/important by 63%

KEY MESSAGE: Participants are being drawn to satellite clubs in part at least because they want flexible, accessible, recognisable sporting opportunities: the types of opportunities that they can engage with on 'their own terms'.

4.0 The impact of satellite clubs

Participants' experiences of attending

- Nearly 96% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that 'staff/coaches are really welcoming'
- Between 83% and 90% also agreed or strongly agreed with suggestions that their clubs welcome people with a wide range of sporting abilities and provide a relaxed and fun atmosphere

KEY MESSAGE: In most instances, survey respondents overwhelmingly and positively identified the types of qualities in their satellite clubs that the original vision for the initiative outlined.

Outcomes for participants – frequency of sports participation

To measure the impact of satellite clubs on participants' frequency of engagement with sport, the survey asked them to say how many times they play sport in a typical month (outside of lessons in school/college) since attending a satellite club?

- Whilst 28% of participants were playing sport less than 4 or 5 times a month (outside of school/college) prior to engaging with a satellite club, this figure dropped to 15% of participants after attendance
- 37% of all respondents increased their activity levels by at least one band as a result of attending satellite clubs (50% experienced no change whilst 13% reduced their frequency of activity)
- Of those who started in the lowest activity band ('3 times a month or less') 63% increased their activity level (whilst 37% experienced no change)

KEY MESSAGE: Crucially, survey data demonstrates that, whilst satellite clubs have helped to successfully increase over a third of participants' rates of engagement with sport, they have had the most dramatic success with participants who started with the lowest rates of sports participation.

If results are compared across a number of participant attributes and the different profiles/types of sessions attended, the best performing groups (in terms of increasing participation levels amongst those with the lowest starting rates) are:

- Frequently those who take part in 'individual' sports (athletics, cycling, swimming)
- Females, older participants, those from specific minority ethnic groups and those who are in employment
- Those attending disability focused sessions or those hosted in non-educational settings
- Participants who had some of the most negative feelings towards sport prior to engaging in satellite clubs
- Those who have been attending sessions for prolonged periods

Other outcomes for participants

- Over 70% of respondents said they have or will encourage others to play sport
- Over two-thirds say they are playing (or will play) sport more often
- Over 60% say they are (or will) exercise more
- Over 60% say they have tried out (or will try out) a new sport
- 50% say they have joined (or will join) another local sports club

KEY MESSAGE: The survey data suggest that satellite clubs have helped many participants to make positive changes in their relationship with sport: changes that can form the basis of more long-term and sustainable changes in behaviour and attitude.

The sustainability of outcomes

A follow up survey with participants who had agreed to be contacted again after their initial response revealed:⁴

- 94% of respondents reported that they are still attending 4 months after their initial survey response
- Of these respondents, 93% are attending all or most sessions
- 54% of respondents say satellite clubs have led to them doing more sport than they would have done otherwise
- The most important factors in keeping participants engaged are:
 - The coaches/staff leading session
 - The sport(s) offered at the sessions
 - The style of delivery
- 70% said they were now less likely to agree with the statement ‘I don’t like sport and exercise at all and will avoid it wherever possible’, whilst 48% said they were more likely to agree with the statement ‘I absolutely love sport and exercise – I play or train whenever I can’

KEY MESSAGE: Follow-up survey data suggests satellite clubs have positively influenced large numbers of participants’ behaviours and attitudes towards sport.

Outcomes for the sport sector

The satellite club initiative has emerged as a key test-bed for some of the insight and analysis that Sport England has produced recently regarding the structure and delivery of youth sport. Deliverers of satellite clubs have been challenged to design clubs that are different in style and content to ‘traditional’ affiliated sports clubs and have been asked – using a better understanding of their ‘audiences’ - to create clubs that are shaped by the needs and wishes of multiple groups of young people.

From interviews with key stakeholders from CSPs and NGBs, it is clear that debates within the satellite club initiative are beginning to have a wider impact on the youth sport

⁴ Only 15% (79) of the 523 participants invited to submit a follow up survey response did so. The data set collected cannot be considered to be statistically representative. However, the data received is still presented here as a tentative indication of how satellite clubs may be influencing participants’ relationship with and attitude towards sport in the medium term.

sector. In line with Sport England's general move towards understanding how to influence the demand for, as well as the supply of, sport, there is good initial evidence that these approaches are beginning to be expressed in many core youth sport programmes, especially those delivered by some NGBs.

KEY MESSAGE: There are opportunities for learnings from satellite clubs to be fed back into curriculum, as well as community, sport, thereby ensuring the initiative leaves a lasting legacy of knowledge and insight for the whole youth sport market.

5.0 Key success factors

From interviews with stakeholders and the research team's case study work, the areas below have emerged as central to the success of the satellite club initiative.

KEY FACTOR 1 - flexibility of approach

In interviews with key stakeholders it was suggested that flexibility and a lack of prescription in the way in which satellite clubs are delivered are central factors in the initiative's success. However, it is clear that this flexibility of practice has to be balanced with a consistent understanding from stakeholders of the rationale and overall purpose of what the initiative is trying to achieve. This means that, whatever NGBs, CSPs and other stakeholders are doing to deliver their sessions, this must be underpinned by a core commitment (at the very least) to creating engaging opportunities for young people to build new relationships with sport.

KEY FACTOR 2 - 'Demand led' provision

Stakeholders noted that Sport England is increasingly committed to understanding and responding to the factors that influence demand for sport amongst different population groups. It was suggested that the satellite club initiative is reflective of this and is, in part at least, a challenge to CSPs, NGBs and other stakeholders to share a commitment to 'customer led' provision. Survey and interview data suggests that the amount of consultation that is taking place with young people prior to the launch of new satellite clubs varies across the initiative. It is suggested that Sport England and other national stakeholders should re-double their commitment to raising the profile of formal and informal consultation with participants (and potential participants) as a key cornerstone of the satellite club initiative.

KEY FACTOR 3 - Hub club and venue selection (the importance of partnerships)

In many of the interviews with stakeholders, it was suggested that in order for a satellite club to be truly successful, the partnerships that operate around the initiative must be able to identify:

- Host venues that have good quality and accessible facilities and understand clearly the purpose of a satellite club
- Hub clubs that are committed to the principles of the overall initiative

In the initial two years of the initiative, there has been an understandable focus on establishing high numbers of satellite clubs and, for CSPs in particular, offering every secondary school in England the chance to host a new club. Now that the initiative is starting to mature, however, a number of interviewees suggested that it may be time to re-focus on the best strategies for identifying venues and hub clubs that really have the right approaches, skills and resources to deliver clubs that are true to the initiative's principles.

KEY FACTOR 4 - Styles of coaching and the skills of coaches

In nearly all interviews with stakeholders, the style of coaching adopted in a satellite club – and more precisely the skills of the coaches leading the club – were identified as the single most important determinants of whether a club is likely to succeed. It was explained that coaches are in many senses the ‘physical embodiment’ of the principles of satellite clubs and that they have to understand and represent the flexibility and inclusiveness of the initiative in order to attract and retain the target group of participants. Large numbers of interviewees suggested that more learning opportunities need to be created to make explicit the skills and approaches that work best in satellite club settings. It was noted that CSPs are already playing an important local role in providing professional development courses for coaches focused on generic themes such as engaging participants and managing challenging behaviour. However, there may now be an opportunity to create more specific resources that share evidence-based understandings of the full range of issues that coaches must consider when developing their approaches to running satellite club sessions.

KEY FACTOR 5 - Communications and marketing

Many stakeholders attested to the importance of communications and marketing in the success of satellite clubs. Interviewees stated that the ‘messages’ associated with satellite clubs need to be ‘insight driven’ and carefully thought through in order that they appeal to target audiences and establish clear understandings of what satellite clubs are designed to do. At clubs where marketing is principally left to the venue (as happens in some school and colleges) the subtlety of what satellite clubs are trying to achieve can be lost as marketing and communications either focus purely on pupils and students or do not identify strongly enough that satellite clubs’ sessions are qualitatively different from normal community sport provision. In these instances, all stakeholders in a satellite club must understand that the messaging associated with their offer is central to ensuring that the right young people are attracted to sessions.

KEY FACTOR 6 - Balancing universal provision with a more targeted approach

Stakeholders understand that satellite clubs are effectively forms of universal provision that have an underlying focus on a particular client group. However, they are not always entirely confident of what this approach means in practice. Some expressed anxiety at how specifically they are supposed to know that they have the right young people at their sessions, not least because the target group is defined by relatively intangible criteria such as previous relationship and attitude towards sport. At this stage, it may be advisable for national stakeholders to develop new methods that can help deliverers to firm-up their understandings of how to access and engage the correct young people for their clubs. Additional work could be done to build deliverers’ confidence that universal sessions, with mixes of young people present, are not necessarily problematic. On the contrary, it may be that mixed sessions actually support the long-term outcomes of the initiative by avoiding the problems associated with over-targeted and separated provision for distinct groups.

KEY FACTOR 7 - Providing clear exit routes (or satellite clubs as destinations)

In the initial modelling that accompanied the design of the initiative, satellite clubs were conceived of as ‘bridgeheads’ or stepping stones into traditional hub club provision. It was suggested that by attending a series of satellite club sessions, participants would be introduced to community sport and ultimately seek to ‘graduate’ to attending the sessions of the ‘proper’ hub club. In interviews with stakeholders, there were a number of doubts expressed about whether this exit route can be achieved practically in all scenarios, not least because many hub clubs do not have the capacity to invite in large numbers of new members on an ongoing basis. Potentially more importantly, some stakeholders also questioned whether this exit route is always appropriate for the young people attending satellite clubs. If these clubs are designed to engage young people who had not previously been attracted by traditional community sport provision, some stakeholders queried whether participants would ultimately want to move on to the type of provision that they had rejected in the first place.

KEY FACTOR 8 - Quality assurance

The satellite club initiative is now its fourth year and in interviews with representatives of CSPs and Sport England, a number of stakeholders reported that there is now an increasing emphasis on developing clear processes for overseeing delivery and ensuring that quality and focus is being maintained ‘on the ground’. At present, arrangements and responsibilities surrounding the quality assurance of satellite clubs varies from NGB-to-NGB and CSP-to-CSP. Now that large numbers of satellite club have been created, it is clear that there is an opportunity to generate a more consistent set of precisely defined quality assurance roles for different stakeholders. At this stage, the research suggests that CSPs – through Club Link Makers and other staff – could be central in undertaking these roles. CSPs enjoy relative independence from the strategies and specific focuses of individual sports and are in an excellent position to be the lead organisations in developing new thoughts on how individual satellite clubs can stay true to the principles of the national initiative, and ensure that these learnings are being fed back into practice.

KEY FACTOR 9 – Sustainability: a focus on learning and knowledge transfer

A number of stakeholders suggested that in order for the satellite club initiative to be truly successful it needs to take a rounded approach to sustainability. In addition to thinking about practical issues associated with sustaining individual clubs, it was suggested CSPs, NGBs and other stakeholders should now be concentrating firmly on how to sustain the model and approach of satellite clubs beyond the initiative. As the satellite club initiative is predicated so strongly on understanding and meeting the demands of groups not usually engaged by community sport, stakeholders suggested it has the clear potential to now start focusing on consolidating learning from the initiative and translating this for broader community sports providers. It was suggested that CSPs could play a lead role here by acting as advocates of insight-driven, demand-led approaches to community and that they could become the overall ‘thought leaders’ for providers on how to package their offers for different audiences. By doing this, interviewees felt that CSPs can help to ensure that, whatever happens to core satellite club funding in the medium-to-long term, the initiative will have left a sustainable legacy

that should ensure that community sport is more flexible, inclusive and attractive for different audiences well into the future.

