

Multi Sports Pilot Research Summary



March 2022

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research
(*spear*)

Context

About the Multi Sports Pilot

Multi Sports Pilot is delivered by the Youth Sport Trust (YST) and funded by Sport England. The pilot aims to build on initial desktop research conducted by the YST in 2020/21 to gain further insight into the multi sports club environment and how multi sport provision can most effectively support young people, schools and communities.

Multi Sport Pilot runs from October 2021 to March 2022. The YST are working with eight School Games Organisers (SGOs) to deliver the Pilot. Each SGO is working with secondary schools to deliver extracurricular multi sport opportunities engaging a minimum of 50 young people in Year 7. SGOs also participate in roundtables led by the YST and designed to share ideas, learning and best practice.

About *spear's* research

spear has been commissioned from October 2021 to March 2022 to conduct the Multi Sports Pilot research. The research is designed to gather insight, increase knowledge and understanding and inform resource development. It explores the challenges faced by stakeholders, showcases effective practice and provides key messages for realising the potential of multi sport provision to support young people, communities and schools.

spear's research comprises 15 interviews with eight SGOs, virtual focus groups with students from two schools and one site visit including observation of activities, an interview with the SGO and a focus group with students.

The Research Report is divided into four substantive sections: Engagement & Delivery, Insight, Impact and Lessons Learnt. Headline Findings, Key Messages and three case studies are also presented.

This Multi Sports Pilot Research Summary provides the context for the programme and research, Headline Findings, and Key Messages 'A Stakeholder's Guide to Realising the Potential of Multi Sport Provision'.

Research questions

- Do stakeholders understand what multi sport provision could or should look like and are they aware of the potential of this provision?
- Do the characteristics of multi sports clubs make them particularly suitable for certain cohorts of young people?
- What is the role of competition in multi sport provision?
- What is the potential for multi sports clubs to be a part of a support package for young people during challenging times?
- How can multi sports clubs best support whole school agenda?
- What role can multi sports clubs play in strengthening links between schools and communities and supporting the Opening School Facilities agenda?
- What needs to happen with respect to policy, provision and practice to realise the potential of multi sport provision?

Multi Sport is a fundamentally different kind of extracurricular sport provision. It is primarily student-led and student-centred, it emphasises fun, enjoyment, personal achievement and wellbeing and it favours flexible, creative, non-traditional methods of sport and activity delivery.



Providers' motivations for offering multi sports clubs include the desire to engage less active or engaged students, build confidence and develop skills, and enable students to meet new people and socialise more, reducing isolation and easing transition.



Multi sports clubs and festivals are delivered in a variety of ways, at different times (curricular and extracurricular), with different groups of students, employing different methods for eliciting student preferences, and offering different activities; the approach is not standard and varies with context.



Student leaders play an important role in supporting delivery of multi sports clubs by creating a friendly and inviting atmosphere, eliciting student preferences, leading activities, socialising with and mentoring younger students and helping them integrate within school.



Aspects of multi sports clubs that appeal most to young people include the relaxed, non-judgmental, pressure-free atmosphere, the variety and novelty of activities on offer and the freedom to choose what sports they want to do and how they want to play.



Multi sport providers tend to lean away from competition; however, they do recognise that if used in moderation and at the right time, competition can increase motivation, engagement and progression.



Benefits reported by stakeholders include greater confidence and engagement with sport, increased wellbeing and development, enhanced feelings of belonging, easier transition and feeling more integrated within school, and better relationships between students and PE staff.



Providers see potential in the multi sport model for supporting the Opening School Facilities agenda and strengthening links between schools and communities, thereby making school sport provision more accessible, inclusive and equitable.



Challenges to embedding, sustaining and scaling up multi sport provision include staffing, space, time, facilities, equipment, and staff competence and confidence.



Encouraging wider adoption of multi sport provision requires evidencing impact and raising awareness of the value and potential of this provision among policy makers, school leaders, staff, parents, young people and community sport providers.



A Stakeholder's Guide to Realising the Potential of Multi Sport Provision



Raise Awareness



Communicate the value of multi sport provision to all stakeholders. The unique features and benefits of multi sport provision are often not well understood so collate evidence of impact, showcase success stories and share effective practice. Demonstrate to policy makers how multi sport provision supports policy priorities around the broad benefits of sport. Inform school leaders about the wide ranging positive impacts on students. Show them the potential for multi sport provision to advance whole school agenda, community links and the Opening School Facilities agenda. Most importantly, show young people that multi sports provision is different: it is sport and activity provision driven by young people, for young people.

Ask, Listen and Involve



Actively involve young people in shaping multi sport provision; be led by them. Student choice and the responsiveness of provision to the needs and interests of young people are key to including and engaging less active, less confident and less engaged students. Experiment with different ways of eliciting student preferences, ensuring the quiet, shy, less assertive students have their voices heard. Create a climate of safety, trust and candour where young people are able and actively encouraged to express their views and feel that their views are valued and acted upon. Involve Young Leaders in driving and co-creating the multi sport experience.

Think Out of the Box



Orient multi sport provision towards non-traditional delivery of sport and the health and wellbeing benefits. Provision that encourages students to compete with themselves and experience feelings of personal achievement is more effective than traditional competition in enhancing intrinsic motivation and engagement in less confident students. Encourage creativity, imagination and adaptability in designing activities. Focus on participation, playfulness, confidence building, skill development and teamwork. Used sparingly, and at the right time, competition with others can motivate engagement and progression. However, the distinctive advantage of multi sport provision lies in activities that give young people opportunities to stretch themselves and foster a love of effort and challenge.

Create a New 'Sport' Environment



Providing the right environment for multi sport is essential to create positive experiences of sport and achieve desired outcomes. The atmosphere of a successful multi sports club is welcoming, friendly, relaxed and inclusive. A successful multi sports club offers a safe, non-judgmental climate that supports experimentation and risk-taking. It provides structure, direction and purpose while also promoting student choice, autonomy and empowerment. Thus multi sport may require a fresh approach to delivery of sport, one that looks and feels very different to young people.

About *spear*

The Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (*spear*) is located within the Faculty of Science, Engineering & Social Sciences at Canterbury Christ Church University. *spear* undertakes a range of evidence-led analyses, from critical commentaries and reflections on current policy and practice, to commissioned research, evaluation and consultancy.

The Centre's research is funded by a range of national and international funders such as the International Olympic Committee, World Health Organisation, Terre des Hommes, Department of Health, Department for Education, Youth Sport Trust, Chance to Shine, Premiership Rugby, Sport Birmingham, parkrun UK and Sport England. Recent work has focused on sport, physical activity, health and wellbeing in schools and communities.

Research conducted by *spear* helps guide and inform public policy by contributing to the wider evidence base used by policy makers, providing a rationale for government and commercial investment, and steering programme improvements that enhance the experience of practitioners and participants.

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