

SCHOOL GAMES REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

1. School Games was created in 2010 as an Olympic/Paralympic style school sport competition and were a key part of the Government's plans for a lasting sporting legacy from hosting the London 2012 Games. Their aim was to further revive competitive sport in schools. Every school in England was to be given the opportunity to get involved, potentially giving every schoolchild the chance to take part. The competition runs across four levels: intra school competition; inter school competition; county festivals; and national finals.
2. The School Games has been highly successful: 86% (21,190) of schools in England take part, 8,000 schools have been awarded the School Games Mark, on average there are 75 competitions each year in each area, more girls than boys take part in the county festivals and 18% of those taking part in the national finals progressed to international selection. In total 166 competitors at Glasgow 2014 were School Games alumni with 59 of these alumni taking home 84 medals between them.
3. The Government's new strategy for an active nation 'Sporting Future' published in December 2015 recognised the contribution the School Games has already made but signalled that the time was right to review the future priorities of the Games.

Government and Sport England, working with the Youth Sport Trust as the current delivery partner, will assess the effectiveness and future priorities of the School Games, ensuring that it is appropriately positioned within the wider context of the new strategy for sport. This will take place before the Level 4 Finals in 2016.

Sporting Future (Dec 2015)

4. Sport England established a task and finish group drawn from across the national partners¹. The review had three distinct phases: desk top review; consultation with partners and others; and the formation of recommendations. This Executive Summary sets out the results, is endorsed by all of the national partners, and is submitted to the Minister for Sport and the Chairman of Sport England for their consideration and agreement.
5. Overall the review concluded that the School Games is well placed to make a strong contribution to delivering the five strategic outcomes set by Sporting Future² and the ambitions of Sport England's new strategy, Towards an active Nation. The recommendations set out in this report seek to maximise the value and impact of the School Games.

¹ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Department of Health, Department for Education, Sport England, British Paralympic Association and the Youth Sport Trust (the current delivery partner).

² Physical Wellbeing, Mental Wellbeing, Individual Development, Social/Community Development and Economic Development.

School Games Vision and Mission

6. The first three recommendations seek to future proof the Games and maximise the contribution to delivering Sporting Future and Towards an Active Nation. They seek to ensure even more school children feel able to engage in competitive school sport. The refocused vision, mission and characteristics is attached as **appendix 1**. The need to engender a sense of competence; promote enjoyment and avoid negative and bad experience will be embedded across all levels. All those involved in the School Games will be supported to have a clear understanding and utilisation of the latest insight.

Recommendation 1

Update the vision and mission for the School Games to clarify the competition levels to avoid confusion around progression and to ensure the games maximises the impact against the five Sporting Future outcomes.

Lead by Sport England and the other National Partners and implemented by September 2016.

Recommendation 2

Formats, guidance and training support across all levels of the School Games will be refreshed to ensure they fully support the ambitions of 'Towards an active nation' and in particular:

- engender a sense of competence;
- promote enjoyment regardless of youngsters' level of ability; and
- avoid negative/bad experiences of competitive school sport.

Lead by Sport England and the other National Partners and implemented from September 2016.

Recommendation 3

Volunteering opportunities across all levels of the School Games should be further strengthened to ensure better pathways to enable children to continue volunteering after they leave school and to maximise synergies with Sport England's new volunteering strategy.

Lead by Sport England and the Delivery Agent (currently the Youth Sport Trust). The timeline for this recommendation will be agreed once Sport England have launched their new volunteering strategy.

School Games Level One to Three

7. Consultation confirmed strong support for improving and capitalising upon new digital technology. This was seen as a way of drawing in support from parents and families plus a way of reaching out to children who see themselves as less sporty. Likewise there was strong support to expand the personal best and individual challenges within the School Games to further widen access to more children. In order to ensure greater consistency consultees felt guidance should be provided on the expectations of the number of opportunities to compete across level 2 (inter school) of the Games.

Recommendation 4

In order to increase the number and diversity of children participating in the School Games and as guided by Sporting Future call for more effort and resource to be devoted to those not currently participating in sport or physical activity:

- ensure better utilisation of digital technology and social media; and
- expand the opportunities for personal best challenges.

Lead by the Delivery Agent (currently the Youth Sport Trust) and School Games Organisers from September 2016.

Recommendation 5

Clarify and set expectations for competition calendars (for example, the number of sports, the number of leagues and so on).

Sport England will consult on draft expectations during the autumn term 2016 and confirm them during the spring term 2017. The Delivery Agent will prepare School Games Organisers for the new approach during the summer term 2017. The new expectations will come into force from September 2017.

8. The level 3 county festivals provide a focus point and culmination of activity in local areas. Each is overseen by a Local Organising Committee (LOC) and are staged by their County Sports Partnerships (in London it's London Youth Games who stage the festival) drawing in support from many other local partners including schools, clubs and sports governing bodies. The review found that there are many effective models for the LOCs and concluded that variation to meet local needs should be retained. However, it was felt that best practice from the most inspiration and high quality county festivals should be shared and adopted by all areas. National partners also recommend that the LOC guidance is updated to maximise the impact on the five strategic outcomes set out by Sporting Future, and the CPD and networking programme should be refreshed.

Recommendation 6

Building on best practice, ensure all County Festivals inspire sustained participation through delivering aspirational events which include an exhibition/fair promoting local community sports clubs and activities to improve transition between school and community sports settings.

Lead by the CSPN and implemented from September 2016

Recommendation 7

The LOC guidance should be updated to maximise the impact on the five Sporting Future outcomes.

Lead by the Delivery Agent from September 2016 and completed and embedded by September 2017.

Recommendation 8

The LOC lead, CPD and networking programme should be refreshed to focus on sharing effective practice plus how best to impact on the five Sporting Future outcomes.

Lead by the Delivery Agent from September 2016 and completed and embedded by September 2017.

School Games Mark

9. The School Games Mark was launched in 2012 to reward schools for their participation in and commitment to the School Games. Schools in England are able to assess themselves against bronze, silver and gold levels of the Mark with external validation of the gold level. It has proven to be a successful development tool and a popular element of the School Games programme with 8,162 schools engaging in it during the academic year 2014/15 which represents an increase of 38% on the previous year. The review has concluded that with a large number of schools now engaged and valuing the programme, the School Games Mark should continue but its criteria should be widened to reward school for involving their pupils in planning and delivery plus also recognise exit routes to community sport.

Recommendation 9

Evolve the School Games Mark to include criteria which rewards schools for;

- involving their pupils in planning and delivering the competition offer; and
- supporting exit routes for their pupils into community activities.

Lead by Sport England and the Delivery Agent with implementation starting during the summer term 2016.

School Games Organisers

10. National funding (from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department of Health) for School Games Organisers (SGOs) supports activity across three days a week and is focused on four tasks: engaging schools; working with partners to provide a range of sporting and cultural opportunities; sustaining activity through community sport; and enabling, growing and supporting the workforce. A large number of SGOs are employed for additional time through local funding. SGOs complete online termly reports. Their reporting is currently focused on action planning. Throughout the consultation phase of the review there was strong support for greater accountability of SGOs both locally and nationally. Whilst the review has concluded that the performance management of SGOs is robust it could be further strengthened through the setting of high level performance indicators for each SGO with performance against the indicators published to drive transparency.
11. Strong views were expressed by a wide range of consultees, supported by intelligence gathered by national partners, that there has sometimes not been sufficient clear water or clarity between the free School Games offer and the services some SGOs charge for. Given the significant level of public funding going into the School Games (c£20m per academic year) a school's entry into the Games must be free of charge. The review has concluded that guidance should be issued to SGOs and their host organisation (in the majority of case schools) clarifying how they should separate and promote the free School Games offer from any charged for services. This should be embedded as an award condition into the funding agreement between Sport England and the SGO hosts.
12. Consultation with SGO hosts surfaced the need for greater support. In particular some SGO line managers highlighted that they found the role difficult to manage as posts are part time and often work remotely from their host organisation. The review has concluded a line manager toolkit should be developed and supported through additional training.

Recommendation 10:

High level KPIs should be established for SGOs, reported on, published and used as part of their performance management. This should be embedded as an award condition.

Lead by Sport England and the Delivery Agent with implementation starting in September 2016 and completed/embedded by September 2017.

Recommendation 11:

Guidance to be issued to SGOs on how they should separate and promote the free School Games offer from any charged for services. This should be embedded as an award condition.

Lead by Sport England and the Delivery Agent with implementation starting in September 2016 and completed/embedded by September 2017.

Recommendation 12

An SGO Line Manager toolkit should be produced to improve performance management, and professional development offered to maximise the impact on the five Sporting Future outcomes and educational outcomes.

Lead by Sport England and the Delivery Agent with implementation starting in September 2016 and completed/embedded by September 2017.

School Games Level 4 National Finals

13. The national finals is a home country, multi-sport, event for some of our most talented young people. In order to maximise the synergy with sports long-term athlete development programmes the c1,500 youngsters who take part are chosen by their sport. This means there is no direct link to levels one to three of the School Games. The inclusion of disabled athletes has been a key element since the inaugural finals in 2006. Since 2006 the event has grown steadily from five to 12 sports.
14. Broadly speaking the finals are considered to be effective and align well with the new government strategy in terms of maximising sporting success and the impact of major events. However, the current costs of the event cannot be sustained going forward and doesn't represent good value for money. As such costs need to be reduced. Whilst the other Home Nation Sport Councils, or their sports governing bodies, contribute to the cost of the finals this does not fully cover the costs associated with their teams.
15. The review has concluded that that the fundamental benefit from an athlete taking part is to the British Team talent pools. Therefore the finals should not duplicate other competition or stand outside of a sports overall long-term athlete and competition pathways.
16. Due to the link to the legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the sports participating in the finals were restricted to Olympic or Paralympic sports. The consultation undertaken by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport surfaced interest from sports outside of the Olympic and Paralympic family, as did consultation for this review. The review has concluded that consideration should be given to allow a broader range of sports to take part subject to also securing the desired cost savings.
17. To further broaden the reach to other sports the review recommends that consideration be given to 'badge' existing relevant and eligible national competitions to be part of the School Games family. Criteria would need to be developed to guide which events are 'badged' in order to safeguard standards, young volunteers and athlete education programme.

Recommendation 13

In accordance with the call within Sporting Future to drive efficiencies, reduce the reliance on the public purse for those already benefiting regularly from sport drive down the cost of the finals event.

Lead by Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust and to be completed by September 2017.

Recommendation 14

The four Home Nations Sports Councils should contribute an appropriate level of funding to the finals event subject to their number of athletes and size of support teams.

Lead by DCMS and Sport England with support from Youth Sport Trust and to be completed by September 2017.

Recommendation 15

Non -Olympic and Paralympic sports should potentially be able to take part in the national finals.

Lead by Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust and to be completed by September 2017.

Recommendation 16

Ahead of the 2017 finals, review which sports and athletes participate in the event:

- for athletes it should benefit home country or British Team talent pools; and
- for sports it should benefit their talent pathway and competition structures with the finals fully integrated into pathways and structures rather than being a duplication.

Sports already participating within the School Games National Finals who do not meet the above criteria will be given the chance to adapt their participation in the finals.

Lead by Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust and to be completed by September 2017.

Recommendation 17

Where appropriate and requested by the sport, other UK school championships or finals could be badged as part of a School Games national finals family of events providing they align with the principle of being part of the talent pathway for the most talented school age athletes (not school teams). This could extend the envelope of this level of the Games.

Lead by Sport England and the Youth Sport Trust and to be completed by September 2017.

July 2016.

APPENDIX 1

MISSION

Keeping competitive sport at the heart of schools and providing more young people with the opportunity to compete and achieve their personal best

VISION

By 2020 the School Games will be continuing to make a clear and meaningful difference to the lives of even more children and young people

CHARACTERISTICS

The next phase of development of the School Games will focus on ensuring it is relevant to more children and young people and their lives today, and allows more of them to achieve their potential. In driving this forward the School Games will seek to:

- engender a sense of competence;
- promote enjoyment; and
- avoid negative or bad experience.

To be relevant to young people and their lives, the School Games will evolve so it:

- is relevant to schools nurturing the development of character, values and life skills;
- contributes to daily physical activity;
- harnesses the power of digital technology and is vibrant, engaging and relevant to children and young people today;
- leverages the inspiration of This Girl Can and reaches more girls and young women plus reach out to other under-represented groups (including those with special education needs or disability);
- is increasingly organised, coached and officiated by children and young people;
- aids retention through primary-secondary transition;
- embraces a positive role for parents; and
- builds off the excitement of (UK hosted) major events.

To allow children and young people to fulfil their potential, the School Games will evolve so it:

- is become even more inclusive;
- adds depth and aids retention within the participant pathway;
- contributes to the duty of care for young athletes and provides multi-sport opportunities;
- promotes innovation in talent assessment, transfer and development;
- embraces 'apprentice' team managers, coaches, and officials;
- raises the aspirations of spectators and competitors; and
- promotes the very best outcomes of school sport.

Schools and pupils will participate and progress through three levels of competition:

- Level 1 – Intra School Competition;
- Level 2 - Inter School Competition; and
- Level 3 - County Festivals.

There will also be an annual School Games Championship for talented young people chosen by the governing bodies of the sports participating in the championships.