

# Sport England Satellite Club Evaluation

## Interim Report 2 Executive Summary



Date  
April 2015

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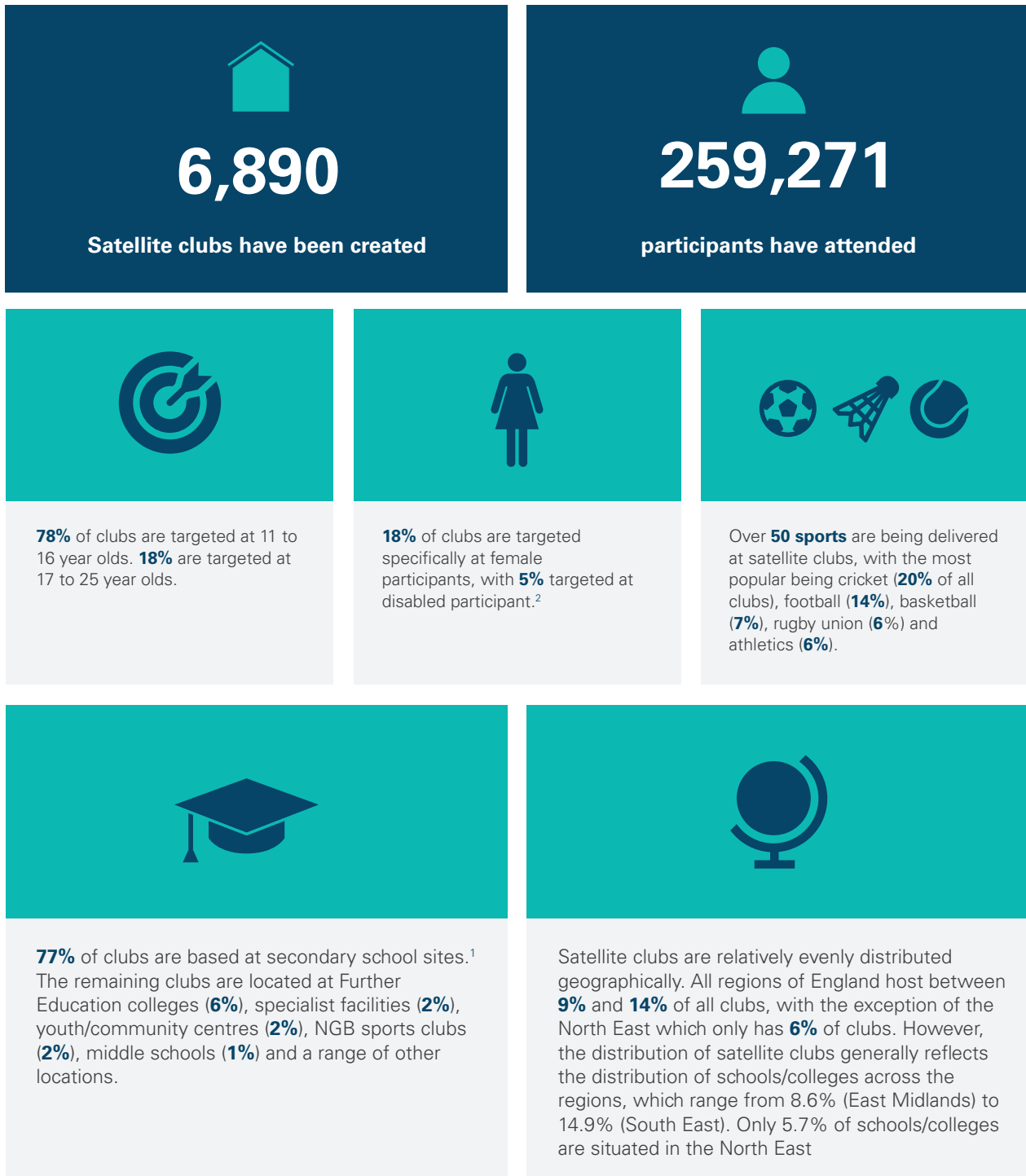
## Introduction

In April 2014, Substance began a two-year evaluation of the satellite club initiative on behalf of Sport England. This is the end of year one report.

The aims of this report are to:

- 1 Develop a set of core principles - that helps to define established, shared understandings of how the satellite club initiative operates and how it is understood by various stakeholders to deliver defined outcomes
  - 2 Outline the findings from the first survey of participants of satellite clubs (conducted between January and March 2015), concentrating in particular on the profile of young people attending clubs, their motivations for attending and the material and attitudinal outcomes they are beginning to experience
  - 3 Present an initial set of 'key success factors' for satellite clubs that can be refined and built upon in the remainder of the research project
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Between April 2013 and March 2015 the satellite club initiative (with a further year to run):

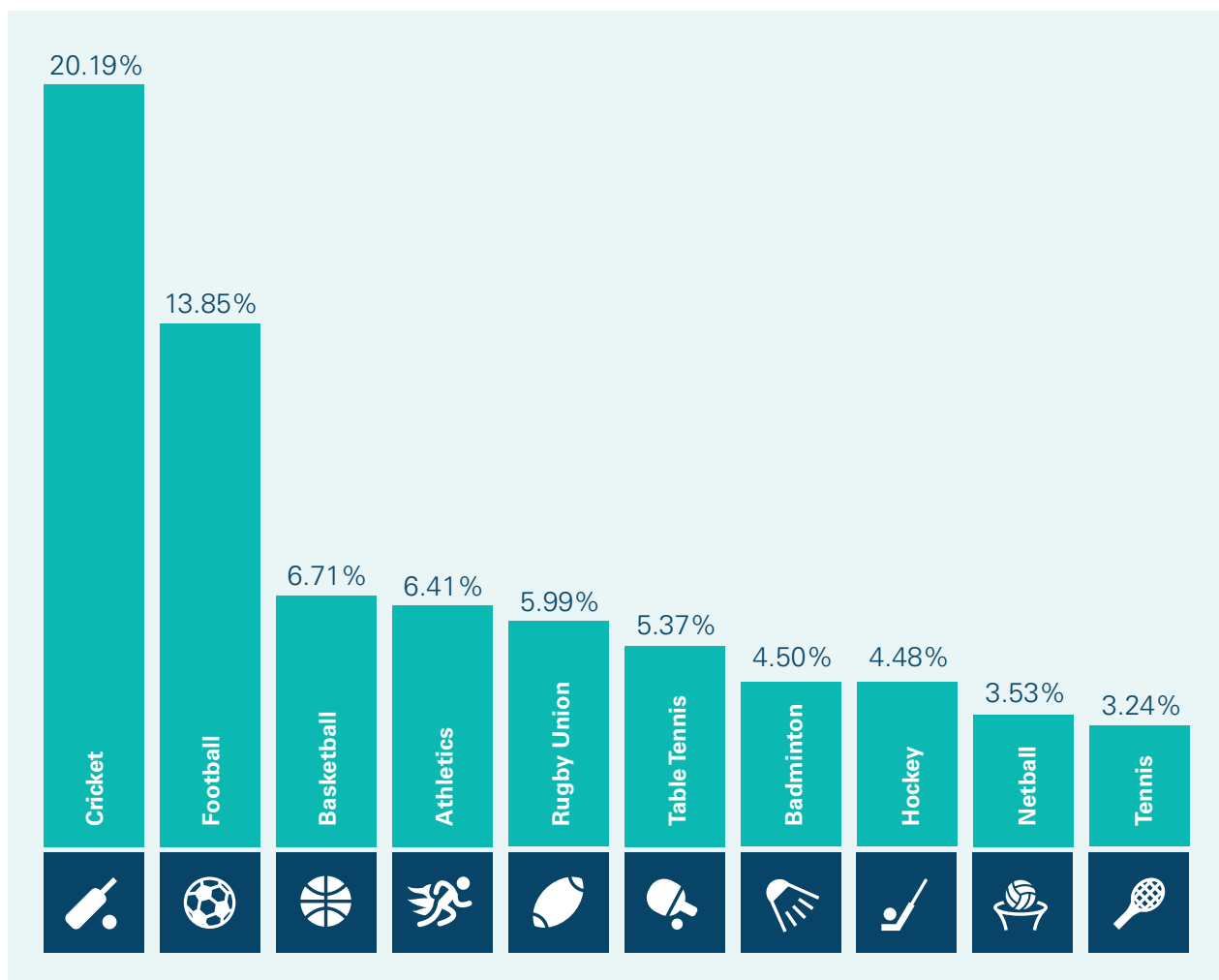


<sup>1</sup> This percentage does not include satellite clubs created under the Premier League 4 Sport initiative

<sup>2</sup> Again, these percentages do not include Premier League 4 Sport satellite clubs

## Distribution of Satellite Clubs By Sport (top 20 sports)

The table below shows the percentage distribution of satellite clubs across different sports (over the first two years of the initiative). Only the top 10 sports (in terms of numbers of satellite clubs) have been included.



## Survey Findings

In January 2015, the first national survey of satellite club participants was launched. The aim was to begin the process of understanding who is attending satellite clubs and, more precisely, to build evidence relating to:

- 1 The broader relationships participants have with venues hosting satellite club
- 2 Participants' experiences of and attitudes towards sport prior to attending satellite clubs
- 3 Participants' motivations for attending
- 4 Participants' levels of satisfaction with the sessions they attend
- 5 Early indications of the impacts and outcomes associated with satellite club attendance, especially in relation to sustainable increases in engagement with sport

The survey received 488 responses prior to closure in March 2015. Based on the number of participants attracted to satellite clubs over the past two years this sample is statistically significant and provides a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of 4.38%.

Survey responses were not representatively distributed with regard to geography, the sport(s) played by respondents and the types of club they attend. This will be corrected during an additional run of the survey later in 2015.

The key findings from the survey are:

**95%**

of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the staff/coaches at their clubs are really welcoming

**80%**

agreed or strongly agreed that their clubs welcome people with a wide range of sporting abilities and provide a relaxed and fun atmosphere

# 54%

of respondents stated that they attend (or used to attend) school/college at their satellite club venue, whilst **21%** indicated that they had no prior relationship with the venue. Results varied by age (with younger and older participants being less likely to be – or have been – students at their satellite club venue). However, survey findings suggests satellite clubs are being successful in engaging young people from across local communities and are not just simply marketing provision to their own students.

Satellite clubs are attracting a client group that was already reasonably active prior to engagement, with around three-quarters of respondents indicating that they were already meeting Sport England's minimum threshold for activity levels before starting to attend. However, nearly half of respondents indicated that they were doing sport **4 or 5 times a month or less** prior to engaging with a satellite club. This suggests the initiative is not solely engaging very active young people and is at least in part succeeding in attracting those who are only doing a small amount of non-curriculum sport regularly.

In terms of prior influences on playing sport, the top two very important/important categories selected by respondents were 'whether it is fun' (**93%**) and 'if coaches/other staff are supportive' (**88%**). Other categories with high responses include 'having the free time to do it', 'if facilities are good' and 'the cost of it'. Taken together, these findings suggest that 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. This indicates that the needs and demands of satellite club participants generally fit well with the broad principles of satellite clubs outlined in this report.

# 62%

of respondents identified themselves as not being 'very' committed to sport prior to engaging with their satellite club. Of this group, **45%** said they liked sport but 'there are lots of other things I'm interested too', whilst a further **37%** said they liked sport 'but struggled to find places/opportunities to play'. This indicates that around half of participants at satellite clubs are either struggling to find opportunities to play sport regularly or are balancing a commitment to sport with many other interests and opportunities. They can, therefore, be regarded as representing the core target group for the satellite club intervention.

# 90%

In terms of motivations for starting to attend satellite clubs, over **60% of participants** said sessions being free or affordable and venues being conveniently located were important or very important factors. The most important/very important factor in attracting respondents to satellite clubs is the sport being offered. **Over 90%** of participants identified this as being a key determinate in their decision to attend.

Motivations for attending satellite clubs differed for respondents depending on the amount of sport they were playing prior to engaging with the initiative. The most active participants indicated that they had attended because satellite clubs supplement their existing sporting behaviour, whilst less active participants attended because they were looking for affordable, convenient provision that is recommended (and/or attended) by friends and family.

Between two-thirds and three-quarters of all respondents said they had - or will - join a competitive sports club, play sport more often, increase the amount of exercise they do, encourage others to take up sport and/or try out new/different sports. In nearly all cases the most active respondents (those who were playing sport frequently prior to joining a satellite club) were more likely to report positive outcomes from the satellite club initiative than the least active. This indicates that more work may be required at satellite clubs to ensure that all participants, regardless of their starting point, are achieving key outcomes in equal numbers.

## 60%

In terms of participant outcomes, survey responses indicate that close to **40%** of participants in the satellite club initiative are achieving the outcome of increasing the amount of sport they are doing in the short-medium term. This figure increases to over **60%** for respondents who were doing sport 3 times or less per month prior to joining a satellite club.

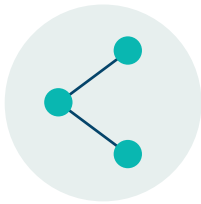
## 95%

When respondents were asked to rate their experiences of satellite clubs, very large numbers identified the types of qualities that would indicate clubs are being true to the overall principles of the initiative. Nearly **95%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that 'staff/coaches are really welcoming' whilst over **80%** 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. Taken together, these findings indicate that respondents in many instances identify exactly the types of qualities in their clubs that the national strategy requires.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents indicated that they intend to attend their satellite club for the next year or more. Whilst this could be read as a simple endorsement of clubs and participants' desires to continue enjoying their sessions, the question may also shed light on how participants understand progression from the satellite club initiative. Many participants appear to value satellite clubs as a destination in their own right, rather than as a transition point to more traditional community sport.

## Initial key success factors

From interviews with stakeholders and the research team's case study work to date, the following areas are starting to emerge as central to the success of the satellite club initiative.



### Flexibility of approach

In interviews with key stakeholders it was suggested that flexibility and 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.



### '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. At this stage of the research, 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.



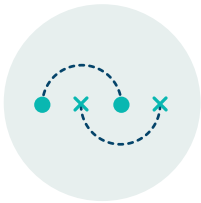
### Hub club and venue selection (the importance of partnerships)

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.





### 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.



### 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 club 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.



### 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.



### 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.



### Quality assurance

The satellite club initiative is now its third 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.



### 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.

