



School Games
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
YEAR 1
August 2012



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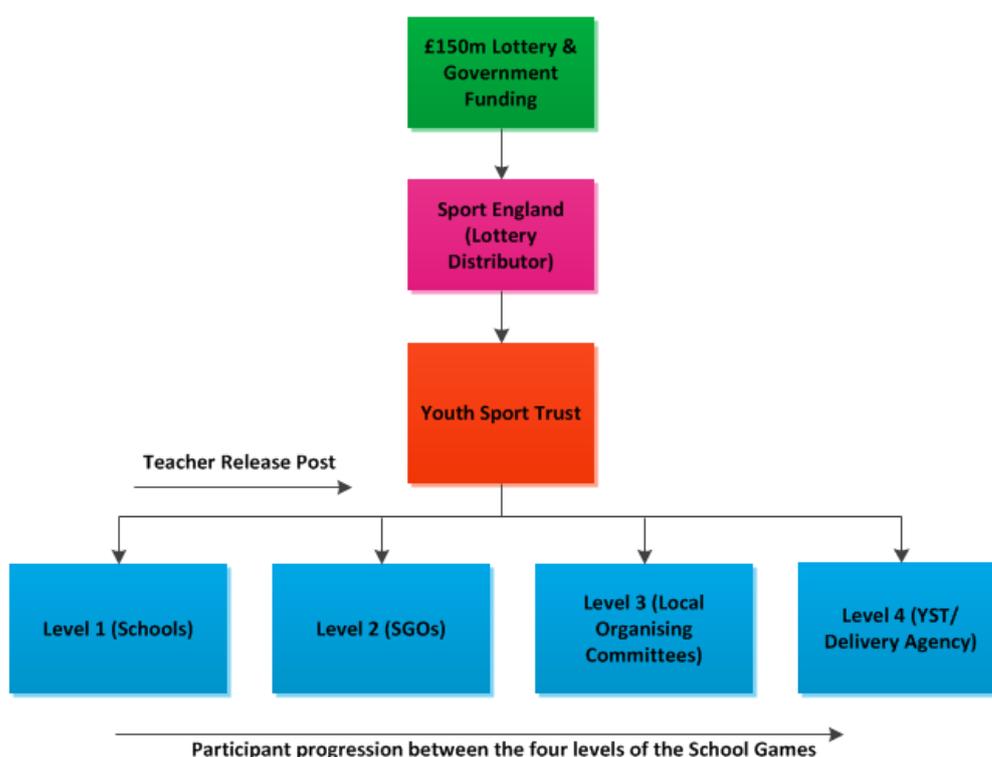
Background

The School Games is a competitive school sport programme designed to motivate and inspire millions of young people across the country to take part in sport. The programme is made up of four levels of activity; level 1 competition in schools (intra-school sport), level 2 competition between schools (inter school sport), level 3 competitions at county level and a level 4 national finals event. The games are designed to build on the events of 2012 to enable every school and child to participate in competitive sport, including opportunities for disabled youngsters. Nationally and locally School Games is being delivered through partnerships. The national partnership is made up of:

- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which has overall policy leadership, supported by the Department for Education and the Department for Health.
- Sport England, which is the Lottery distributor and are supporting the engagement of Sports Governing Bodies and County Sports Partnerships.
- The British Paralympic Association, which brings the vision and inspiration of the Paralympics and
- The Youth Sport Trust, which has been commissioned by Sport England to provide development support to schools, sports and other local partners.

Over £150m of Lottery and Government funding is being invested to support the School Games. This includes: up to £35.5m Lottery funding from Sport England between 2010-15; £50.4m exchequer funding from the Department of Health and Sport England to fund 450 School Games Organisers (SGOs) and Change 4 Life Clubs; and £65m exchequer funding from the Department for Education to release a PE teacher for one day a week in all secondary schools.

At a local level, the School Games is delivered by schools, clubs, county sports partnerships and other local partners. Local Organising Committees have been set up, chaired by Head Teachers, to oversee the Level 3 county festivals. The figure below highlights the delivery partnerships of the School Games.



Introduction

The evidence collected to date highlights a successful first year of delivery, with significant enhancements to connectivity between levels and improvements to county events reported throughout the course of the year. There are definite improvements relating to engagement from schools, intra and inter school delivery, NGB support and programme resourcing that can be reviewed and considered for the coming year. The challenge is to continue the programme development and to ensure that young people continue to be inspired by School Games in order to generate the desired Olympic legacy impact.

The evidence collected from key personnel within NGBs and schools, from the SGO network and through attendance at Level 3 county festivals and the national Level 4 event, clearly indicates that year one of the School Games programme has achieved a wide range of early impacts. Furthermore there has been a significant amount of support for the School Games ethos, with SGOs describing the programme as 'inspirational' and a 'fantastic success'. There have been significant changes in the structure of school sport delivery and it is encouraging to note, with the School Games programme now gaining momentum and awareness and understanding increasing, that the majority of SGOs perceive there to be exciting times ahead.

School Games website

The School Games website has been a cause of frustration and the 'loss' of schools who registered initially but who have not re-registered since the website was upgraded is disappointing. This is also a contributory factor to the amount of schools currently involved being significantly understated by the registration and monitoring data available at present. Although 13,769 schools have registered at some point, just 7,125 of these schools are registered on the current version of the website. There are also some concerns regarding whether the website is 'fit for purpose' and SGOs have reported finding it difficult to encourage schools to register as there are no tangible benefits for doing this, incentives could include offering a members-only section of the School Games website which hosts additional resources and advice. There remains significant scope for increasing engagement in the website from both primary and secondary schools, although SGO capacity issues are often a barrier to driving greater buy in.

Kitemarking

The School games kitemarking scheme was launched in June 2012, aiming to reward schools for their commitment to the development of School Games competition across their schools and community. To date 89 schools have assessed themselves on the kitemark criteria, 86% have achieved bronze status, 12% silver status and 2% gold status. We expect to see a significant increase in these figures once schools complete their assessments and record their results. Kitemarking was commended by several SGOs as it presents a good challenge and helps to identify those schools that are prepared to go the extra mile to ensure quality school sport.

The School Games offer

There is a strong consensus that a greater number of opportunities have been on offer and that these opportunities have encompassed a wider range of sports. Several NGBs, including the Amateur Swimming Association and Rugby Football Union, reported making their offer of sport to schools more focused and of adapting the format of competition to tailor their offer to the School Games programme.

In some areas it has taken longer to get Level 1 events set up. In particular primary schools struggle to have the resources required to establish intra school competition without direct support from SGOs or assistance from secondary schools. The general feeling is that because budgets and resources are tight, young people taking part at Level 1 might not get the School Games 'experience', they are unlikely to recognise events as part of a bigger programme / competition structure and in many cases these events won't be branded as 'School Games'.

SGOs and schools viewed the School Games structure very positively, as they felt that it provided greater clarity of what competition should look like, standardising formats and demonstrating how links between levels should be made. This was also strengthened by the strong branding of the School Games, which SGOs reported added value to the competition and helped to raise the profile of competitive school sport.

A further strength of School Games has reportedly been the inclusive nature of the programme. Many SGOs highlighted the integration of disabled participants within mainstream sporting events and festivals as a significant positive and the opportunity for disabled participants to compete at the same time as participants from mainstream schools gave a real sense of inclusion to the programme.

“The inclusion agenda is inspirational and cannot be faulted. It's a difficult area and the national championing of the cause is beginning to bring about a sea change in outlook”.

Another major positive has been the additional leadership and volunteering opportunities presented through the School Games programme. There is evidence of leadership and volunteering pathways with young people gaining experience at Levels 1 and 2 and then continuing their involvement at Level 3 festivals. Many schools praised the cross-curricular opportunities that had been created and highlighted their intentions to develop this area further. The Level 3 festivals in particular have really embraced the support of volunteers and have been provided them with opportunities to further develop their skills learnt through other programmes such as sports leaders.

Connectivity between Levels 1-4

It remains early days in the School Games programme and many SGOs, NGBs and schools acknowledge that the links between levels 1, 2 and 3 of the programme require further strengthening. In some areas the levels are well linked and provide a seamless pathway for participants, however in other areas some levels operate on a 'standalone' basis, or there is limited activity to feed upwards into the competitive structure. In some cases the extent of activity (particularly at Level 1) is simply not known. Notwithstanding this, there is growing evidence of much more cohesion in terms of connecting up competition and events, which are starting to mirror the seasonality and progression of School Games so a more joined up system is emerging. A number of schools also reported that their competition programme had increased during 2012, which is a positive step forwards in terms of school sport competition.

There are mixed feelings on whether Levels 3 and 4 of the School Games programme should link up (by using a qualification process from county festivals, rather than a selection process managed by NGBs). Within the SGO network there is a strong willingness for these links to be made as they feel that this will be the ultimate experience for young athletes. However there is uncertainty regarding whether this would work in practice, with the logistics and resource implications requiring significant consideration. This is something which requires some serious consideration in the future.

The Olympic year effect

The synergies between School Games and the Olympic and Paralympic Games are extremely positive, the Olympics and Paralympics have been used to enhance the School Games and help build momentum around the programme from the outset. So much work has been undertaken within schools around the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and the School Games opportunities have formed part of this offer. A number of SGOs have reported the delivery of a wider range of sports compared to previous years, helping to create additional opportunities for young people. The challenge is now to further build on this momentum and to use the inspirational impact of the Olympics and Paralympics as a starting block to sustain higher levels of participation and to achieve the Olympic legacy aim. The Olympics and Paralympics have been used to inspire young people and some School Games competitions have secured additional benefits of having Olympic torches or torch bearers present, giving the programme additional impetus and motivating young people even further.

Resource issues

It is important that the SGO network receives acknowledgement for what they have achieved to date (with limited resources) and additional support where possible to further develop the School Games programme. A major concern is currently the Teacher Release funding which is due to end in 2013, although it should be noted that schools are free to continue to fund their PE teacher release from their own funds if they so wish. SGOs view this funding as an essential part of ensuring that the School Games programme is successfully delivered and are concerned that the reduction of resources conflicts with their aims of further growing and developing the programme.

Recommendations - Levels 1-3

- The benefits of schools registering onto the School Games website should be re-considered. Additional incentives are required (now that tickets for the 2012 Level 4 School Games event are not applicable) and SGOs need greater support to promote the benefits of registering to schools. Incentives could include a members only area of the School Games website which includes additional resources and advice for schools. Clear monitoring requirements and guidance are also needed.
- It is important that the resource issues highlighted by the SGO network are considered and if possible addressed.
- Efforts need to be made to ensure stronger linkages between levels 1, 2 and 3.
- Kitemarking needs further promotion and should be extended to Level 1.
- Poor weather contingencies are needed for Level 3 competitions.
- Level 3 competitions need greater competition time, lesser time for the opening ceremony, and either less waiting time between events or entertainments for non-competitors.
- There is additional scope for improving NGB support for SGOs and schools. It is suggested that this area could be reviewed in order to manage expectations and clarify NGB roles. This would help to ensure that the opportunities generated by the School Games programme for individual sports is maximised.

The Level 4 National Event

The Level 4 event was very well received and highly successful, 1,439 athletes competed across 12 different sports and 167 athletes with a disability competed in Paralympic type events. Furthermore, 593 volunteers helped to deliver the Level 4 event across the four days of competition. In total 1,507 people contributed to the staging of the School Games Level 4 event.

The intrinsic nature of the event

Almost all respondents in all capacities from competitors to parents enjoyed their experience of the School Games Level 4 event. Scores of 90%+ were typical for all groups which in turn provide a high level assessment that the organisation and presentation of the event was highly effective. Similarly high scores were recorded for respondents being glad that they gave up their time to attend the event and agreeing that they had had a great time at the event.

There was also near unanimous agreement that the event is a great way to showcase talented young sports people. This point is particularly true in the context of the young athletes having the opportunity to experience the Olympic Park prior to the majority of the nation's Olympians and Paralympians in July, August and September 2012. Four out of five people across all groups noted that there had been an Olympic / Paralympic feel to the event. Words consistently used to describe the event were invariably superlatives and included: 'amazing'; 'exciting', 'excellent', 'fantastic', and 'brilliant'.

The inspirational impacts of the event

As well as being an enjoyable experience in its own right, the event also had the power to inspire people in various ways. At a basic level almost 90% of people across all groups stated that they understood that

Sainsbury's sponsorship of the event was to help promote a healthy and active lifestyle. This in turn translated into a quantifiable inspiration effect. Overall, 69% of competitors, 56% of volunteers and 48% of spectators agreed that the event had inspired them to take part in more sport. This finding was particularly pronounced amongst school children who were spectating with 91% of teachers stating that their students had been inspired to take part in more sport. The inspirational effect of the School Games Level 4 event is entirely consistent with work conducted at elite sport events by UK Sport which demonstrates that attendance at such events can have an inspiration effect. In addition to people being inspired to take part in more sport themselves, most respondents also said that they would encourage family and friends to be more active as well. Qualitative evidence from teachers supported the potential for an inspiration effect and some had noticed children being more enthusiastic about sport since attending the School Games.

Recommendations for improvement - Level 4

Whilst the headline findings are extremely positive, the School Games will be held again and as part of a commitment to continuous improvement it is important that the lessons from the past are used to improve the future. Most of the recommendations are concerned with operational aspects of the event and should be read in the context of making a good product better rather than major weaknesses. The key recommendations below are those which are either major or which relate to more than one group. Relatively minor concerns which tend to affect one group only are covered in the group-specific reports.

- Disabled people were under represented amongst the volunteers (2%) and a more inclusive event would have a higher proportion of disabled people involved. An aspirational target would be to recruit volunteers with a disability in the same proportion as athletes with a disability.
- For all groups internal to the event (i.e. excluding spectators) the quantity, quality and availability of food were singled out as the key area for improvement. There were logistical problems that compounded feedback on this attribute. However, it has been a common complaint at previous UK School Games event and in 2012 was particularly pronounced.
- For the public and school parties there were issues over ticketing that are probably peculiar to the Olympic Park and the unique context of 2012. However, the purchase of tickets is an early part of the 'spectator experience' and it is important that first impressions are favourable.
- For athletes and volunteers communication prior to the event was identified as an area for improvement with various examples given of aspects of communication being last minute and at times confusing.
- The diverse locations of the hotels and venues meant that 'down time' was a particular challenge for team managers and 31% of them cited activities and entertainment for athletes as an area for improvement.

Future editions of the event are unlikely to enjoy a financial investment of some £6m, therefore it is important that whatever resources are available are used as effectively and efficiently as possible. Most of the suggested improvements are concerned with operational improvements and are not necessarily resource intensive. In this regard, the lessons learnt from the 2012 represent a useful legacy for future editions of the event.