

PART 2: ELITE SPORT AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

This section considers elite sport (partly represented in Figure 3.1 by UK Sport and National Governing Bodies) and other influential organisations, including

some discussion of the private sector. The range of other organisations is not represented in Figure 3.1.

Elite sport

It is perhaps becoming clear that the control of sport is often a matter of dispute: who controls elite sport is also a vexed question. First, it would help to identify what is meant by elite sport. Professional sports such as football, rugby, cricket, tennis are played at an elite level but are self-financing commercial (private) operations and therefore not within the scope of this discussion. By elite sport we mean sport which is associated with organisations supporting those aspiring to national representative honours, most often at Commonwealth and Olympic Games; this involves the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The lead agencies at UK level are UK Sport (a 'public' Sports Council) and the British Olympic Association (BOA), a voluntary organisation. In simple terms, UK Sport funds, with National Lottery input, the training and preparation of athletes via NGBs. UK Sport also co-ordinates the UK's anti-doping programme. In contrast, the BOA prepares the selection procedures, acclimatisation and sends the team (up to 500 people) to the Winter and Summer Games, with the British Paralympic Association (BPA) supporting them for the Paralympic Games at the same venue.

BOX 3.2: THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS

There is also a Special Olympics for athletes with learning difficulties, organised completely separately.

Whilst the BOA raises millions of pounds from companies to pay for Olympic participation, it does not receive any tax payers' money. It is categorised as a voluntary organisation – its primary motive is not profit driven. It also values its independence from government. An example of this was in 1980 when it ignored the government demands for a boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games in protest against the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR.

Figure 3.3 outlines the mix of inputs and organisations involved at UK level. The role of NGBs (see also p. 38) is paramount in elite sport since it is they who have the specialist knowledge, identify and nurture young talent, employ

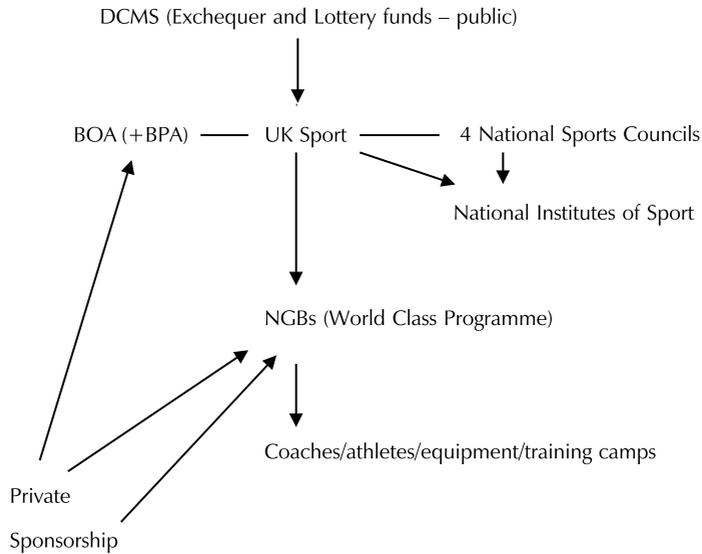


Figure 3.3 The funding of elite sport at UK level – a mix of private, voluntary and public sector inputs

the coaches and propose selection criteria. These aspects are all developed in what is known as a World Class Performance Plan, which UK Sport approves for funding with strict performance targets. The sports that deliver the most medals receive the highest funding; athletics, cycling, rowing and sailing have recently accounted for some 60 per cent of UK medals and these sports top the public funding of elite sport and therefore have rather more influence than other sports.

Another name appears in Figure 3.3, that of National Institutes of Sport, e.g. Scottish Institute of Sport, English Institute of Sport (EIS). The title suggests a state-of-the-art building in one place, but this is only partly true. It is a series of top class facilities and services (e.g. fitness testing, nutritionists) based on the *needs of each sport* and often connected with top universities. For example, British success in the winter sports discipline of bobsleigh is connected with expertise and a specialist starting track built at Bath University for £350,000 in 1999. Cycling uses a velodrome in Manchester, sailing uses a Weymouth facility and so on. Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland Sports Councils fund their own institutes, whilst the EIS is funded by UK Sport.

The main challenge in co-ordinating UK sporting squads and teams is that there is also the national representative level, where Wales, Scotland, Northern

Ireland and England compete, with their own national pride at stake, in events such as the Commonwealth Games or in football and other team sports. The national Sports Councils and sports institutes, especially Wales and Scotland, place great importance on a strong showing at these events, and for UK teams some funding and political tensions often emerge. The structures of the devolution agenda post-1997 have strengthened such national representation. For example, considerable debate has consistently stalled the proposed formation of a UK football team for the Olympics. No other country in the world has four nations, each with their own sporting teams – the UK is really in a unique position, mainly due to its leading role in the historical development and dissemination of sport in the nineteenth century.

Other major organisations

National Governing Bodies (NGBs)

The NGBs, in addition to their high profile role in developing Olympians, train, accredit and regulate the teaching of their sport. Anyone who has been taught to swim in formal lessons will be influenced by the guidelines and training that their swimming teacher has been through. Furthermore, anyone who has competed in swimming in a formal setting will probably be a member of a club who will abide by the rules of swimming developed by the NGB (in collaboration with the international federation for the sport).

Figure 3.4 helps to understand the role of an NGB in the funding, influence and delivery of its sport to end users (the general public). The boxes titled ‘quality and safety standards’ and ‘clubs’ in the delivery section of the figure represents the instructional and competition activities explained above for swimming. NGBs also engage in a number of other activities. A useful ‘what if’ exercise is to consider what might happen if an NGB suddenly ceased to exist.

Collectively NGBs have quite a powerful voice. The Central Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR) is effectively a form of ‘trade union’ that represents the interests of NGBs and voluntary clubs in England. The other UK nations have similar bodies, called the Scottish Sports Association, the Welsh Sports Association and the Northern Ireland Sports Forum.

Youth Sports Trust (YST)

This charity established in 1994, has been very influential in developing TOP Play and TOP Sport programmes to enhance the teaching of physical education

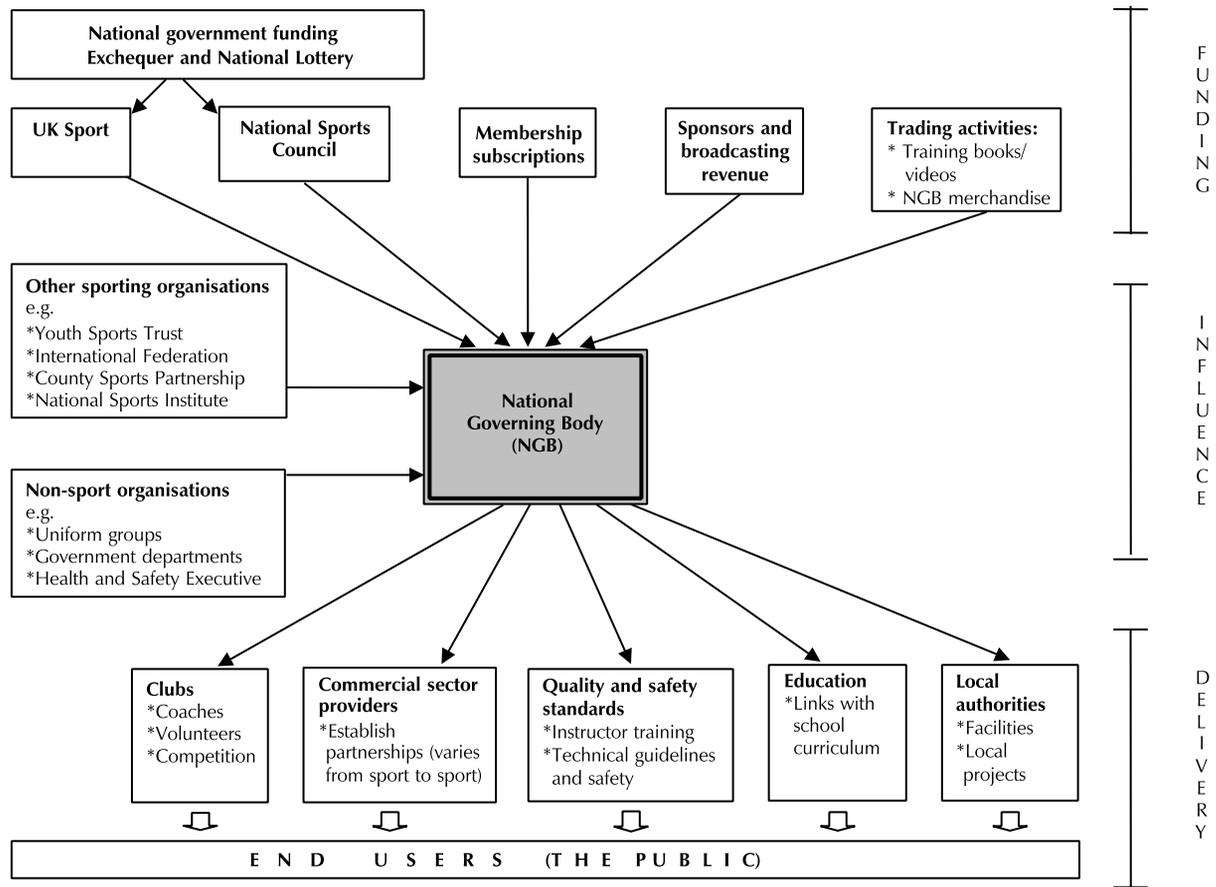


Figure 3.4 Typical funding and organisational links of a National Governing Body

(PE) in primary and secondary schools. TOP is used as an attractive name and does not refer to anything in particular. The YST has become so successful an independent organisation that it is now used by the London-based Department responsible for Education to co-ordinate the investment and bringing together of school sport and clubs by using School Sport Partnerships (SSPs). The SSPs work with County Sport Partnerships (in England), or their national equivalents, to try to provide a co-ordinated approach to school sport.

The private sector

The private sector is represented in Figure 3.1 on the right side of the figure, in which there is recognition of both:

- the sponsorship of individuals, clubs and parts of NGB activity; and
- the existence of a range of private operators who run some local facilities, particularly in the health and fitness industry.

The importance of local fitness facilities and the private sector's involvement in this area is the subject of Chapter 4. The total annual funding inputs into both sponsorship and commercial facilities are very difficult to quantify in monetary terms but they have a substantial impact. In fact governments are particularly keen to encourage private sector sponsorship of local or inclusive sport and fitness projects; a number of schemes, such as 'Sportsmatch', operate to enhance grassroots sport by offering what is termed 'matching funding'. If a company puts £10,000 into a scheme the government will, subject to certain criteria, match it with another £10,000, doubling the funds to a total of £20,000. This example of different sectors or organisations working together to achieve similar goals is known as partnership working and is particularly effective in pooling expertise and human and financial resources. An example of an organisation that works with a range of partners is the Fitness Industry Association (FIA), which leads the area of fitness.

The Fitness Industry Association

As the not-for-profit trade organisation for the health and fitness sector, the FIA promotes campaigns, runs training events and education programmes about best practice within the industry. It aims to represent the industry at a range of levels and influence government policy. It also works towards raising standards in the industry. As part of their membership of the FIA, all facilities work to comply

with a code of practice, which is a set of performance standards covering health and safety, staff training and customer care. Membership is from both the public and private sectors and each year research is conducted to produce the *State of the UK Fitness Industry Report*, which is used to inform decision-making. The FIA works closely with the Register of Exercise Professionals, which is discussed in Chapter 12.

Professionalisation: sport and fitness workers

Sport is a relatively new field of working (c.40 years) compared to professions such as medicine, law or education. There are earlier examples of professional sports performers but here the focus is on those involved in delivering sport and fitness opportunities. The challenge is how to change a growing area of work, such as this, into a recognised 'profession', with the enhanced status this brings. SkillsActive is partly involved in this area; it is a government funded agency known as a *sector skills council* that is responsible for enhancing the development of skills and training in the leisure sector. Organisations representing sports facility managers, sports development officers and fitness instructors are working towards developing the professional status of the industry with training, representation and levels of recognition.

At the time of writing this area was under scrutiny by the DCMS and others since three bodies exist, working in slightly different areas, as their titles suggest,

- the Institute of Sport and Recreation Management (ISRM);
- the Institute of Sport, Parks and Leisure (ISPAL);
- the Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) (closely linked to SkillsActive)

Discussions on an amalgamation between the ISRM and ISPAL foundered in 2006. It is possible that there may be changes to these arrangements over time but increasing the 'professional' status of the field remains a priority.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this chapter a number of organisations have been mentioned and the complexities of who is in control have, to some extent, been simplified for the sake of clarity. In the UK our long stable democracy has encouraged the development of often small clubs, interest groups and independent organisations. More recently the UK's democratic tradition has been expressed in the

development of devolved governments. This diversity and plurality of interests in the UK can be seen as a strength (the large number of different cultural traditions and sports played compared to other countries) as well as an obstacle (trying to organise these diverse interests).

A number of harsh words have been written about the organisation of sport in the UK in the past. Adjectives such as 'complex', 'fragmented' and 'inefficient' often appear when people comment on the arrangements. Indeed, even a UK government sports minister had this to say:

We have 112 recognized sports in Britain. We also have 397 governing bodies, five Sports Councils and four ministers. It's nonsense. By June, I intend to do something to rationalize this structure. Until that happens sport has its hands tied.

(Banks, quoted in Miller, 1998)

Sports ministers have always struggled to 'do something' about it since they do not sit at the highest levels of government; nor do they control the main budgets of the Sports Councils or local authorities. However, times are changing and the hosting of the 2012 Olympic Games in London is acting as a catalyst for change: sport and health issues are rising up the political agenda and the role of different bodies is being clarified. If sport and health promotion were to change from being a discretionary to a mandatory local public service, subject to the considerable scrutiny that this would bring (as it does in education and health), it would help transform current arrangements.

Indeed this is happening to some extent since local authority providers are grappling with the introduction of comprehensive performance assessment (CPA). The CPA is the performance management framework used by the Audit Commission and government to measure local authority performance and drive improvement in the sector. The (functional) importance of sport, recreation and leisure services is highlighted by the Audit Commission's report *Public Sports and Recreation Services*: 'The CPA will assess councils' contribution to improving the health of their communities, meeting the needs of young people and their overall performance in cultural services. Sports and recreation provision contribute to all these elements of CPA' (2006, p. 11). This is a major step forward in the importance placed on sport and fitness. Note, in particular, the way it is phrased above: 'health of their communities and meeting the needs of young people'. This suggests the future focus of local authorities will be the use of sport to meet these types of target since they will be heavily criticised if they do not reach the goals set.

Finally, to respond to the initial question 'Who's in charge?', the answer is that there is no one lead organisation in control. This is due partly to devolution and partly to the tradition of letting sport govern itself; this has resulted in a number of organisations claiming to be in charge of their own areas. In future, the most effective arrangement would be to find a way of combining the work of the three most important organisations in grassroots sport, summarised in both Figures 3.1 and 3.4: local authorities, National Governing Bodies and their clubs, and the education system. If only it were that simple.

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