

Community Sports Networks Guidance Information

The Single System for Sport:

'The Structures for administering and delivering sport ... are extremely complex. They have evolved, ad hoc, over a long period of time'

Game Plan, December 2002

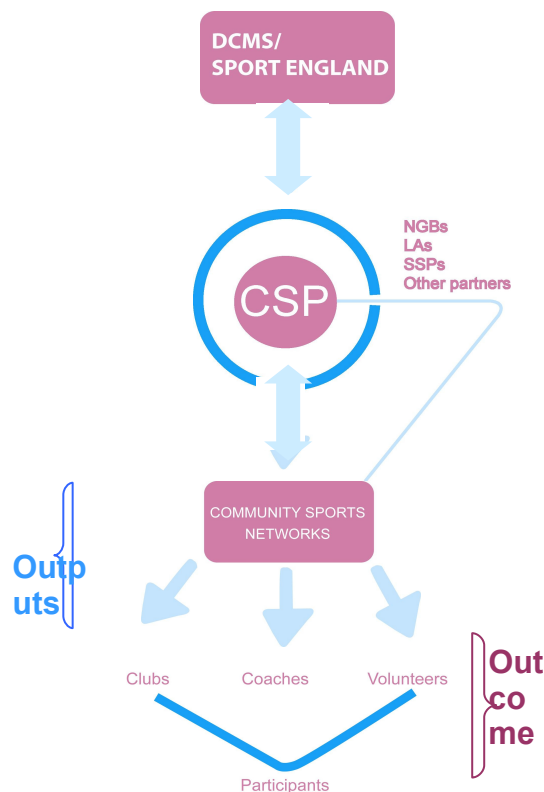
Government has set a national target to widen the base and increase participation in England by 1% annually. To achieve this, it will be necessary to work through a Single System for the delivery of sport in England which is simple, systematic and joined up, overcoming the inefficiencies identified in both Game Plan and the Review of National Sport, Effort and Resources.

The National Framework for Sport identified that 'at a local level there was felt to be a need for all local authorities to 'take the lead', individually or in partnership with neighbouring authorities, for overseeing the strategic planning for structured sport, physical education, and lifelong learning through sport, and informal recreation activities. This should incorporate all of the educational and early years, public sector, voluntary sector and commercial sector interests within their geographical boundaries and be linked to the wider 'shared priorities' for their communities'.

The Single System and Community Sports Networks offers this opportunity.

The Single System for Sport will ensure:

- One strategy for Sport
- An evidence based approach
- Robust performance management
- A bottom up, top down planning mechanism with investment targeted where it is needed most
- Resources that are placed where they can make the most effective and quickest difference to the end user
- Joined up or integrated delivery



The Single System offers the opportunity to create one system for sport across the country bringing in key partners such as local authorities, school sports partnerships, national governing bodies and other groups working together with a common theme.

London's hosting of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games offers a unique opportunity to change the face of sport and physical activity. Through focussed investment in the Single System for Sport, talent identification and performance pathways will be grounded in the community pulling together key agencies, quality facilities and governing body resources to provide a long-lasting legacy for everyone with the aspiration to achieve their potential.

Community Sports Networks:

Community Sports Networks (CSNs) are an integral element of the Single System for Sport. At a very basic level these groups are a locally co-ordinated network whose core functions are :-

Increasing participation in sport and physical activity

Widening access to opportunities

Many such networks, alliances and partnerships already exist at this local level and their integration into the Single System should be viewed in terms of a process of evolution and change rather than a new development or initiative.

Whilst CSNs are likely to be local authority based, co-ordination and planning across local authority boundaries will be necessary to avoid duplication and to take advantage of creating economies of scale. Within the Single System County Sports Partnership are ideally placed to take on responsibility for this countywide perspective supporting the CSNs within their geographic area.

Where possible, building upon existing local networks, CSNs will:

- Comprise a group of local 'delivery agents' pulled from a range of relevant organisations and sectors to represent the sport and physical activity environment
- Identify local needs and potential interventions, and develop a locally shared vision with buy in from key partners including the Local Strategic Partnership
- Secure resources from a broad range of partners to deliver the identified interventions and outcomes and be accountable for that investment
- Focus upon building capacity to increase participation and widen opportunities

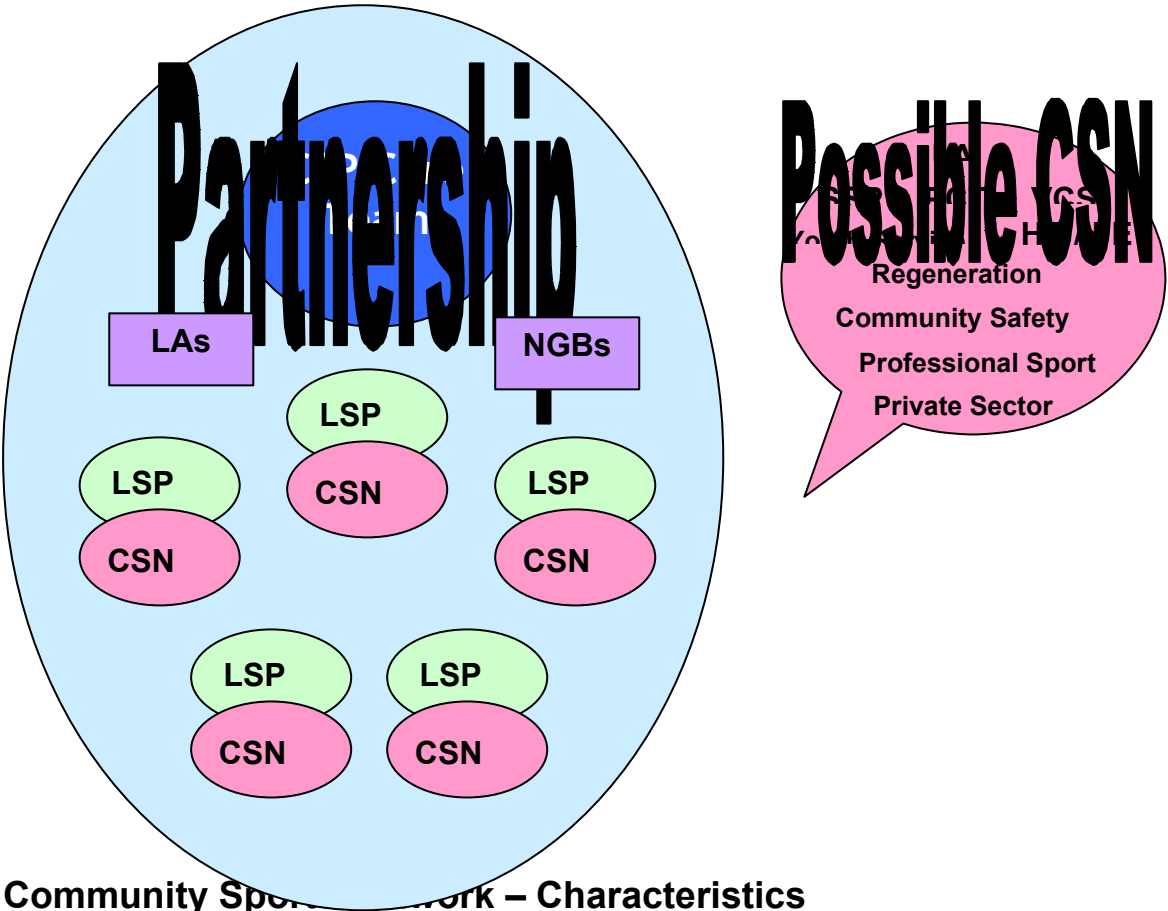
Community Sports Networks - Composition:

As previously noted, research has identified that local networks already exist at community level within some Local Authority areas. Where this is the case the priority is to link the existing network to the Single System for Sport co-ordinated and supported by the CSP. Where this does not apply, local deliverers must be encouraged to consider the establishment of CSNs to meet the needs of local communities.

It is not necessary to have a prescribed structure for a Community Sports Network as its strength lies in its diversity and responsiveness to local issues. One of the CSNs greatest assets will be its ability to draw in the key players from the community to focus upon local needs and then to influence and shape measures to ensure change occurs.

These key players will potentially include partners from across sport, health, all education and early years providers, community safety, regeneration and the local voluntary and community sector. A CSN might consist of 10 of these players or 20, might be called an alliance or a partnership, may develop a strategy or an action plan but all will have the same outcome of raising participation in sport and physical activity.

The diagram below gives an example of how this may look and its relationship within the partnership :-



Community Sports Network – Characteristics

By looking at the existing working structures a common range of characteristics, roles and responsibilities can be identified which make the CSN model successful at

recognizing need and implementing change within the local environment. These characteristics can be seen as follows :

- Ideally, but not exclusively, contiguous in geography with Local Authority boundaries
- Linked or working towards a link with the Local Strategic Partnership
- Having a clear vision with outcomes which are both realistic and appropriate to the area, based on the identified needs of the community
- Ideally the Local Authority playing a key role in coordination and leadership
- Having a representative group which includes all relevant local stakeholders from public, private and voluntary sectors with an interest in increasing sport and physical activity levels
- School Sports Partnerships as a key partner, often represented by the Partnership Development Manager
- Finding a balance between strategy and delivery - strategic in its partnership and planning whilst coordinating and delivering local opportunities
- Using sport as a tool to deliver broader social policy and community outcomes
- Being a driver to support the engagement of sport at an even more local level - neighbourhood and area based forums, for example
- Reducing waste and duplication through sharing resources and knowledge

Community Sports Network - Roles and Responsibilities

- Act as the local voice for sport and physical activity
- Support and assist in the creation and development of sporting pathways for people to achieve their potential
- Increase the infrastructure capacity of the local professional and voluntary sector, both paid and unpaid
- Coordinate the engagement and integration of sport in order to support the achievement of outcomes as part of Local Area Agreements (LAAs)
- Support the achievement of Performance Indicators (PIs) as part of the Local Authority CPA process and the Single System for Sport including PESSCL targets
- Successfully coordinate opportunities for sport and recreational physical activity in the local population by providing effective leadership
- Effectively monitor and assess Sport England investments made via the CSP.

Community Sports Network – Outcomes

Whilst it is acknowledged that there must be a great deal of flexibility in how CSNs develop and that they should be responsive to local need, there is a requirement that each has common outcomes which enable the Single System to maximise its effectiveness.

CORE Outcomes – those common to all CSNs in the Single System

- **Raise participation levels within sport and physical activity by 1% year on year**
- **Widen access to opportunities for sport and physical activity**
- **Bring together and align partners existing priorities and targets within one joined up local delivery / action / strategic plan for sport and physical activity within the CSN area based upon the needs of local communities**

Relationship between Community Sports Networks and County Sports Partnerships:

Community Sport Networks are key components of a County Sports Partnership. CSN's provide the critical linkage between the CSP 'core team' and delivery at a local level. The relationship between the 'core team' of the CSP and the CSN local driver is vital to create a seamless two-way flow of information, resource and achievement of mutually agreed outcomes.

The CSP 'core team' can utilise its independence and plays a key role in advising, co-ordinating and supporting a number of CSN's within the county to ensure that where necessary strategic decisions are made in conjunction with them. They will also have a key role in assisting CSN's to contribute to widening access and increasing participation, and that they firmly meet the needs of the local community.

County Sports Partnerships will:

- Support medium and long term planning through the production of sub-regional strategies / plans / priorities for action
- Interpret and shape national, regional and local policy to best fit future community need in partnership with their CSNs
- Provide a mechanism for information sharing, gathering, dissemination and innovation between and across CSNs in order to support more effective delivery at a local level
- Develop a Single System to support effective decision making and policy decisions for sport at a county level
- Work with the Regional Sports Board to provide investment into sport through CSNs based on evidence of local need

- Be responsible for the collation of relevant data from investment into CSNs in partnership with the CSN and provide regular reports to the Regional Sports Boards on progress of investment against outcomes
- Identify economies of scale and avoid duplication across boundaries

Community Sports Networks will:

- Feed local plans through their respective CSP to inform development of CSP sub-regional strategies / plans / priorities for action
- Work in partnership with other CSNs across the CSP area to share approaches and information
- Work with the CSP to interpret sub regional and regional policy in the context of local needs and priorities
- Provide regular information relating to its work to the CSP in the context of the CSPs performance management framework

Resourcing the Single System for Sport

Resources in terms of the single system can be seen in two parts. Firstly in providing funds to develop the infrastructure, as with the core funding provided to CSPs and secondly in funding for activities which are identified as key interventions and actions by CSPs and CSNs.

In terms of CSNs, it is evident that many have formed independently of Sport England's intervention, building strong partnerships to assist in the common goal. It is therefore recommended that the partners within the CSN look to offer support in terms of infrastructure such as officer time, secretariat and other administrative functions whether through pooling of resources or officer time.

However, the CSP should also look at its support and co-ordination role in terms of its own infrastructure and where possible utilise the core-funding draw down to ensure that it can effectively support the CSNs within its core team. This will also help to ensure that CSNs are sustainable through clear commitment from its constituent organisations.

With regard to investment into interventions and actions there is an expectation that Community Sport Networks will make better use of existing resources which partners bring to the table and will aim to identify new resources from other sources. CSN partners will need to ensure new and existing resources are used for activities which support the overall aims and objectives of the CSN, minimising duplication and maximising cost effectiveness.

The nine Regional Sports Boards will ensure that all investments and interventions made through the Community Investment Fund support the development of a single, coherent system for Community Sport. It is likely that such investments will be identified and supported through County Sports Partnerships and their respective Community Sports Networks.

Funding will be channelled through to specific interventions and activities identified within a sub regional sports and physical activity strategy co-ordinated by the CSP or

by the local delivery / action / strategic plan of the CSN. Any proposals must meet the criteria set out for Community Investment Funding.

The next steps

Across the regions 61 pathfinder Community Sport Networks have been identified which will be established by the end of March 2006. These will provide a diverse range of examples and approaches that will help shape the full national roll out.

In order that we can continue to learn from and develop Community Sports Networks the monitoring and evaluation of the roll out will be key. Consultants have been commissioned to carry out an initial evaluation of four of the pathfinder CSNs and this information will help to shape the way that they are evaluated in the future. The consultants will be looking at the process of setting up the networks, the added value of being involved, relationships with Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements and how the Single System is working in that particular geographic area.

As the initial pathfinders are rolled out Sport England regions will monitor the progress of their development and identify further case studies. The guidance will be updated and checked by the project team on two occasions over the coming year in order that the learning is encompassed within the guidance material and that innovation and creativity are built into it.

These pathfinders will provide the final link in the Single System offering the opportunity to align policy and practice, create true partnership working and create one system for community sport across the country.