



BRIEFING PAPER

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London Olympics 2012: a sporting legacy?

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Inside:

1. Introduction
2. Labour Government plans
3. Coalition Government plans
4. Post Games progress
5. Sport England's Active People Survey
6. DCMS consultation on a new strategy for sport (August 2015)
7. New sporting strategy published (December 2015)
8. Selected further reading



Contents

Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Labour Government plans	4
3. Coalition Government plans	5
4. Post Games progress	7
5. Sport England's Active People Survey	9
6. DCMS consultation on a new strategy for sport (August 2015)	10
7. New sporting strategy published (December 2015)	11
8. Selected further reading	12

Summary

The Labour and Coalition Governments both published plans to use the 2012 Olympic Games to increase grassroots participation in sport.

According to a November 2013 House of Lords Select Committee report, a “post-Games step change in participation across the UK and across different sports did not materialise.”

In June 2015, the Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch, admitted that participation rates in sport were “not good enough” and that the Government was working on a new strategy for sport. This was published, following a consultation exercise, in December 2015.

The new strategy notes that, for over a decade, Government policy had concentrated on getting more people participating in sport and winning more Olympic and Paralympic medals. While these remain part of the strategy, future policy will focus on how sport benefits the public and the country. The new strategy is therefore based around five broad outcomes that sport can deliver:

- physical wellbeing
- mental wellbeing
- individual development
- social and community development
- economic development

Government funding for sport and physical activity will go to projects that can demonstrate how they will make a measurable and positive contribution to some or all of the above outcomes.

1. Introduction

Planning for London 2012 was underpinned by a commitment to create a positive legacy from the Games.

London's official [bid documents](#) spoke of the "unparalleled opportunity to achieve – in an integrated way – the sporting, cultural, economic, social and environmental objectives of the UK, London and its neighbouring regions."¹ An accompanying *Questionnaire response* claimed that the 2012 Games "would enhance sport in London and the United Kingdom forever".²

2. Labour Government plans

In June 2008, the Labour Government set out [plans](#) for the long-term benefits of the Games.³ These were based around:

- the regeneration of East London
- inspiring community activity by young people
- encouraging business
- inspiring sustainable living
- making the UK a world-leading sporting nation⁴

Headline ambitions for a sporting legacy included:

- inspiring young people through sport: offering all 5 to 16 year-olds in England five hours of high-quality sport a week and all 16 to 19 year-olds three hours a week by 2012
- getting people more active: helping at least two million more people in England be more active by 2012

Plans for getting people more active included a £140 million fund to encourage local authorities to open swimming pools free to the over-60s and under-16-year-olds.⁵

¹ [Theme 1 – Concept and legacy](#), *London 2012 Candidate File*, November 2004, p23

² *London 2012 - Response to the questionnaire for cities applying to become Candidate cities to host the Games of the XXX Olympiad and the Paralympic Games in 2012*, November 2004, p1

³ DCMS, [Before, during and after: making the most of the London 2012 Games](#), June 2008

⁴ *Ibid*, p3

⁵ "Free swimming hailed as vision for the future as 2012 Legacy Action Plan is launched", DCMS press release, 6 June 2008; ["Free swimming programme: basic throughput data by local authority"](#), DCMS statistical release, 27 October 2009. Further statistics are available from a ["free swimming"](#) section of the Gov.UK website [accessed 18 March 2016]

3. Coalition Government plans

The Coalition's [Programme for Government](#) included a commitment to produce a safe and secure Games that would leave a "genuine and lasting legacy".⁶

In June 2010, the Government announced that funding for the free swimming initiative was being withdrawn as part of a package of Departmental savings.⁷

The Coalition also dropped the Labour Government's target of increasing sporting participation by two million. The then Secretary of State, Jeremy Hunt, was [asked](#) about this by the Culture, Media and Sport Committee in September 2010 and said:

(...) We dropped that target because we believe that having that kind of top-down target can often have a counterproductive effect, in the way that people spend money in order to tick a box rather than to achieve the objective that you're aiming for. We haven't dropped the participation targets for individual sports in the whole sport plans, and we will continue to fund over 40 sports national governing bodies...⁸

Olympic legacy plan (December 2010)

A legacy [action plan](#) of December 2010 focused on four areas:

- increasing grassroots sporting participation, particularly by young people, and to encourage the whole population to be more physically active
- exploiting opportunities for economic growth offered by hosting the Games
- promoting community engagement through the Games
- ensuring the development of the Olympic Park after the Games to drive the regeneration of East London⁹

Detailed plans for sport were set out on pp2-6 of the plan.

Youth sport strategy (January 2012)

A youth sport [strategy](#) of January 2012 spoke of obtaining "consistent increases in the proportion of people regularly playing sport...in particular...the number of 14 to 25 year olds who take up sport as a habit for life".¹⁰

The strategy included:

- building a lasting legacy of competitive sport in schools

⁶ [The Coalition: our programme for Government](#), May 2010, p14

⁷ ["DCMS savings announced"](#), DCMS press release, 17 June 2010

⁸ Question 34 of [Oral evidence](#) to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee on the DCMS Accounts 2009-10 and the responsibilities of the Secretary of State, 14 September 2010

⁹ DCMS, [Plans for the legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games](#), December 2010, p1

¹⁰ [HC Deb 10 January 2012 c4-5WS](#)

- improving links between schools and community sports clubs
- asking sports governing bodies, where young people are the main participants, to spend around 60% of their funding on activities that promote sport as a habit for life
- investing in facilities¹¹

Sporting legacy plan (September 2012)

The Games closed on 12 August. The following month, the Coalition Government gave details of a plan to “deliver on the commitment to ‘inspire a generation’ and secure a lasting legacy”.¹²

The sporting legacy plan included:

- [Places People Play](#) – a Sport England initiative to fund new facilities and participation programmes
- the [Youth Sport Strategy](#)
- the [School Games](#) programme
- £1.5 million for the English Federation of Disability Sport to increase participation in sports by disabled people

¹¹ DCMS, [Creating a sporting habit for life - a new youth sport strategy](#), January 2012, pp3-4

¹² [HC Deb 18 September 2012 c36-9WS](#)

4. Post Games progress

Lords Committee report (November 2013)

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Olympic Legacy published its [report](#) in November 2013.¹³

The Committee said that “a post-Games step change in participation across the UK and across different sports did not materialise”:¹⁴

The legacy aspiration was for a step change in participation, with the inspiration of the Games leading to much greater participation by the general public. Looking at the data as they stand, it [is] too soon to say whether the slight post-Games rise in activity will be sustained, or whether the slight fall overall earlier this year was more than a seasonal blip. Whatever the position, the evidence does not support a surge in participation in the immediate wake of the Games across the population as a whole...

The longer term picture from 2005 is positive but a long term sustained legacy in participation will need real commitment to infrastructure, social as well as physical. This will need schools and local authorities to be as much a part of the picture as Sport England’s approach to funding.

The gap in participation between previously under-represented groups and the general population does appear to be narrowing, albeit slowly. The narrowing of the gap is to be welcomed, but it will only be sustained if the right sort of investment is put into developing the facilities in sports clubs to ensure that they are more inclusive environments than in the past...¹⁵

A number of recommendations were made on sporting participation, school age sport, and sports facilities.¹⁶

In its February 2014 [response](#), the then Government referred to, among other things, its youth sport strategy and Sport England’s investment into 46 national governing bodies of sport to deliver their whole sport plans.¹⁷

DCMS report (March 2015)

A DCMS [report](#), published in March 2015, gave information on investment in sport and the impact of the 2012 Games.¹⁸

On participation in sport, the report said that “1.6 million more people are playing sport once a week” than when London won the Olympic bid in 2005.¹⁹

¹³ House of Lords Select Committee on Olympic and Paralympic Legacy, [Keeping the flame alive: the Olympic and Paralympic Legacy](#), HL Paper 78 2013-14, November 2013

¹⁴ Ibid, summary

¹⁵ Ibid, p8

¹⁶ Ibid, pp8-13

¹⁷ [Cm 8814](#), February 2014, pp1-7

¹⁸ DCMS, [A living legacy: 2010-15 sport policy and investment](#), March 2015

¹⁹ Ibid, p14

On the School Games, the report found that nearly 70% of schools were involved, including 13,000 primary schools.²⁰

Third annual legacy report (August 2015)

The third [annual report](#) on the Olympic legacy was published by the Government and Mayor of London in August 2015.

On sport and healthy living, the report referred to the following:

- £165m invested in over 2,400 community sports facilities by Sport England since 2011
- [“Everybody Active, Every Day”](#) launched - a national framework for physical activity interventions
- £5.4m awarded to 16 physical activity projects aimed at the least active, through the 2015 funding round of Sport England’s “Get Healthy, Get Active” fund
- Wide range of major events staged in the UK including the Commonwealth Games
- [“Gold Framework”](#) published by DCMS and UK Sport, setting out support available for organisers of major sporting events
- 106 community facilities upgraded and 400,000 Londoners participating in grassroots sport and physical activities through the Mayor of London’s sports legacy programme²¹

²⁰ Ibid, p29

²¹ HM Government/Mayor of London, [Inspired by 2012: The legacy from the Olympic and Paralympic Games](#), August 2015, p10

5. Sport England's Active People Survey

Sport England invests Lottery and Exchequer money to “increase the number of people playing sport regularly, keep them playing, and improve talent development”.²²

The Active People Survey, carried out on behalf of Sport England by the social research company TNS BMRB, measures the number of adults taking part in sport across England.²³

The most recent findings were published in June 2015 and provide information on:

- [the national picture](#)
- [the local picture](#)
- [participation in individual sports](#)

The survey found that during the year up to March 2015:

- 15.5 million people aged 16 years and over in England played sport at least once a week: an increase of 1.4 million since the first year of the survey in 2005/6
- most adults – 58% - still did not play sport²⁴

In a June 2015 House of Commons [debate](#) on the Olympic legacy, the Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch, admitted that participation rates in sport were “not good enough” and that she was “not happy” with the Active People Survey results.²⁵

The Minister said that the DCMS was working on a new sports strategy to replace the one in place since 2002.²⁶

²² Sport England website, [How we do it - strategic investments](#) [accessed 18 March 2016]

²³ Sport England website, [What is the active people survey?](#) [accessed 18 March 2016]

²⁴ Sport England website, [The national picture](#) [accessed 18 March 2016]

²⁵ [HC Deb 24 June 2015 c1002](#)

²⁶ Ibid

6. DCMS consultation on a new strategy for sport (August 2015)

In August 2015, the DCMS published a [consultation document](#) on a new strategy for sport.

The document admitted that using the 2012 Games to increase participation in sport had been a “challenge”:

(...) There is no doubt that the London 2012 Games inspired many people to do many amazing things. Our elite athletes are fantastic role models and we had hoped that this inspiration would touch everyone. But turning this inspiration into participation has been a challenge... the fact that participation rates are now beginning to decline from their peak in 2012 shows we need to do more.²⁷

The consultation sought views on ten themes. One was participation:

- a. How to address the recent decline in the number of people that regularly take part in sport and deliver a long-term sustainable increase in participation;
- b. What type(s) of participation should be encouraged and how should they be measured;
- c. How to ensure that funding goes to those who can best deliver results;
- d. How to specifically target under-represented groups;
- e. Understanding the role of the private sector, and how public sector bodies, National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and other sports bodies should work with the private sector to help deliver an increase in participation;
- f. How to best support participation in new and/or non-traditional sports and activities;
- g. How to maximise the potential of new technology to increase participation;
- h. How to use the power of sport to achieve broader positive social outcomes and whether some funding should specifically be spent for that purpose.²⁸

The consultation closed on 2 October 2015.

There were around 3,200 responses. The majority welcomed the idea of a new strategy.²⁹

²⁷ DCMS, [A New Strategy for Sport: Consultation Paper](#), August 2015, p4

²⁸ Ibid, p8

²⁹ HM Government, [Sporting future: a new strategy for an active nation](#), December 2015, p81

7. New sporting strategy published (December 2015)

A new cross-government [sport strategy](#) was published in December 2015.

This notes that, for over a decade, Government policy had concentrated on getting more people participating in sport and winning more Olympic and Paralympic medals. While these remain part of the new strategy, future policy will focus on how sport benefits the public and the country.³⁰ The new strategy is therefore based around five broad outcomes that sport can deliver:

- physical wellbeing
- mental wellbeing
- individual development
- social and community development
- economic development³¹

Government funding for sport and physical activity will go to projects that can demonstrate how they will make a measurable and positive contribution to some or all of the above outcomes.³² Chapter 9 of the strategy looks in detail at how outcomes will be measured.

The strategy involves a range of actions including:

- broadening Sport England's remit so that it becomes responsible for sport outside school from the age of five, rather than fourteen
- replacing the *Active People Survey* with *Active Lives* - this will measure how active people are overall, rather than how often they take part in any particular sport
- future policy reflecting the value of broader engagement in sport - whether through volunteering, watching sport, or enjoying the "feel-good factor" of sporting success
- reaffirming commitment to Olympic and Paralympic success but extending that ambition to non-Olympic sports where the Government will support success through grassroots investment in those sports and by sharing [UK Sport's](#) knowledge³³

³⁰ Ibid, p16

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid

³³ Ibid, pp10-11

8. Selected further reading

The following sources give greater detail and discussion on the sporting legacy of the 2012 Games. Some also consider the wider effect of the Games in relation to urban regeneration and the economy.

- HM Government/Mayor of London, [*Inspired by 2012: The legacy from the Olympic and Paralympic Games*](#), August 2015
- HM Government, [*2010 to 2015 government policy: 2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy*](#), May 2015
- DCMS [*A Living Legacy: 2010-15 sport policy and investment*](#), March 2015
- Gov.UK website, [2012 Olympic and Paralympic legacy](#)
- Gov.UK website, [Olympic and Paralympic Legacy Unit newsletters](#)
- [“Sofa 1 Exercise 0: is that the great Olympic legacy Blair promised?”](#), *Guardian*, 2 February 2015
- HM Government/Mayor of London, [*Moving More, Living More*](#), February 2014
- [“What has been London 2012's legacy for the Olympic sports a year after the Games?”](#), *Telegraph*, 25 July 2013
- DCMS, [*Post Games evaluation: Meta-evaluation of the impacts and legacy of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*](#), July 2013
- Public Accounts Select Committee, [*The London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games: post-Games review*](#), HC 812 2012-13, April 2013
- Emma Norris et al, [*Making the Games: what government can learn from London 2012*](#), Institute of Government, January 2013
- International Olympic Committee, [*London 2012 facts and figures*](#), November 2012
- J.A. Mangan and Mark Dyreson (eds), *Olympic Legacies: Intended and Unintended: Political, Cultural, Economic and Educational*, Routledge, 2012
- Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [*London 2012 Games: the next lap*](#), HC 104-I 2007-08, April 2008

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