



## Sport in the Community

3.1 Local Authorities are key providers of sport and recreation and play a central role in the delivery of sport in and for the community. The Local Government Act 2000 has given Local Authorities new powers to promote economic, social and environmental well being. However, existing infrastructure and provision of facilities, leisure services and sports development opportunities vary across the country. Competing priorities for Local Authority resources have meant that leisure budgets have been hard pressed to maintain the ageing stock. Making up for years of lack of investment will be a challenge, but it is one we have to meet if all people are to have access to sport and physical recreation both for its own sake and for the sake of the wider health and social benefits sport and other recreational activities – such as fitness, exercise, dance and walking – can bring to communities. The recently published NAO report on obesity highlighted the need for an active lifestyle to prevent obesity and avoid the risk of associated diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

3.2 Government recognises the need to support Local Authorities in building up sports and leisure services which serve the needs of local people. The continuing impact of the Sports Lottery Fund in funding over 700 Local Authority facilities at a cost of £412 million is significantly benefiting local regeneration. The Space for Sport and Arts scheme is funding facilities based in primary schools at the heart of local communities, and stipulating that projects must include provision for community use to gain funding. The £750 million (£581 million in England) NOF Round 3 fund for PE and School Sport will be allocated on the same principle. It is important that Local Authorities and Local Education Authorities work together so that the potential of these developments for local communities is fully realised. Local Authorities, supported by community strategies, must argue the case for funding for sport across other departments and sectors, for example through Health Improvement Plans. The Children's Fund, Quality Protects and youth offending funds provide additional sources for Local Authorities to tap into as part of neighbourhood renewal strategies. Local Authorities are also encouraged to look beyond Government, and to explore the potential of public / private sector partnerships for capital and revenue investment in their areas. The Department for Culture Media and Sport over a three year period 2001–04, has £90m PFI credits available to support projects which fall within its remit. These measures will all add to the stock of community facilities. Sports Tourism is another source of income which is too often untapped. Many of our most deprived inner city areas contain within them major sports venues capable of attracting large national and even international audiences. Both regional and national sporting events have the potential to bring a range of economic and social benefits to their localities. Government will facilitate the sharing of approaches to strategic development needs and potential between Local Authorities and their key partners.

3.3 Effective communication within and between Authorities will be a key element in developing consistently better services across the country. The Government has appointed Nottingham, Knowsley, Gateshead and Sunderland as Beacon Councils for social and economic regeneration through culture, sport and tourism. These councils will share with colleagues in Authorities and from other sectors good practice and innovation in making the most of cultural and sporting activities

- As a priority, DCMS will co-ordinate the provision of a comprehensive sports information network which will facilitate many of the action points set out in all parts of this section. Negotiations with potential private sector partners have already begun, and we expect that the initial phase of the service will be running by the end of 2001.

3.4 There are four distinct areas of work around Community Sport:

- Community provision of sporting facilities
- Social inclusion and community development through sport
- The development of sport in the community
- Training and development of sports development officers, coaches, leaders, officials, administrators and volunteers

## Community Provision

3.5 An overview of current provision will provide a context to inform future investment in and planning for Local Authority facilities. We recognise that some of the recommendations set out here will represent a formidable challenge to many Local Authorities. In acknowledging this we are adopting the same approach as the Local Cultural Strategy Guidance, which encourages

research into existing services and facilities in all sectors but undertaken in a pragmatic and expedient manner. The strategy should be informed by the nature, pattern and spread of activity and detailed mapping exercises may be undertaken as part of the development of service specific strategies such as, for example sport.

3.6 Playing fields, and other outdoor spaces raise different but often overlapping issues, and require distinctive approaches. At the heart of both approaches there must be a commitment to equality of access and opportunity:

- In developing strategies over the next 5 years, Local Authorities should consult with relevant agencies to ensure that new and enhanced indoor and outdoor facilities provide equal opportunity for participation based on different needs in terms of gender, age, ethnic diversity and disability.

## Playing Fields

3.7 It is an aspiration that by the end of the decade each Local Authority should have a comprehensive audit of all outdoor playing field facilities to include public (education and leisure), private and voluntary provision. This is an ambitious goal. It might draw on work Local Planning Authorities may already be doing as part of the development plan process, to establish local databases of playing pitch provision, but will also need input from a range of other sources. We are encouraging Local Authorities to set targets for per capita provision, based on their knowledge of existing provision and needs in their own and neighbouring areas which they can then measure against practice in Best Value reviews To support Local Authorities in this:



