

Going the Distance: Impact, journeys and distance travelled. Third Interim National Positive Futures Case Study

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‘Going the distance’:

Impact, journeys and distance travelled

Third Interim National Positive Futures Case Study Research Report

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August 2006

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‘Going the distance’: Executive Summary

In this final interim report we intend to focus more explicitly on the *impact* of Positive Futures through the duration of our study. In doing so, we also intend to present an alternative framework for the assessment of programme impacts which will involve:

- A critical review of the evaluative framework for PF and conventional approaches to research and evaluation in this sector.
- Presentation of the most pertinent themes that have emerged from the research in order to reveal a sense of ‘best practice’ and the story of what it is to be involved with PF and the challenges the work presents.
- A fresh, illustrated consideration of the ways in which we look at the idea of progression and programme achievement.

Positive Futures and conventional measures of success

The last round of Key Elements surveys revealed the following snapshot data from our six case study projects.

- Whilst continuing to attract new participants, significant proportions remain engaged from one evaluation period to the next.
- All of the projects engage a significant proportion of girls and young women.
- An extensive programme of non sports activities sits alongside more conventional sports provision.
- Young people’s progression is seen to relate principally to educational improvement, better social relations and growing engagement with the programme.
- Those projects working with fewer participants are more likely to have a significant impact on a higher proportion of those they work with than projects working with large numbers.

Key Message The strength of the Key Elements format was its inclusion of a focus upon involvement and personal achievement rather than dubious claims relating to causality. As the research has moved forward, these experiences have helped to inform the demand for a new model of M&E which is more attuned to the needs of the sports based social policy sector.

Diversion v Development

- All work with young people could be regarded in the first instance as diversionary.
- Some projects draw distinctions between diversionary and developmental work.

- For other projects diversionary work represents a ‘taster’ bringing new participants into contact with their work.
- Ideally PF involves layering a developmental positive *futures* approach over a diversionary positive activities approach.

Key Message PF projects need to mobilise the attractions of sport and the advantages of engaging young people in positive activities whilst using this engagement to move beyond the diversionary and into more developmental styles of work.

PF and the use and perception of neighbourhood spaces

- The work of PF is intimately and inevitably tied up with both the perception and use of local spaces.
- This objective is not merely a factor of external practitioner demands but is wrapped up in the everyday realities faced by participants.
- When talking about their areas young people often reflect on them in terms of their own fears of crime and danger.
- For others, the work revealed young people’s affinity with their environment and great love for friends and family.
- Projects have often designed their programmes of activity accordingly, whether this is to accommodate young people’s preferences, to challenge the associated territorialism or avoid the conflicts associated with it.
- One of the principle aims of the PF programme is to provide young people defined as being ‘at risk’ with safe space in which to develop.
- In some contexts this is about finding spaces which lie outside notions of geography and territory and merely provide ‘room’.
- Several of the projects provide spaces for participants to use simply as ‘chill out’ space.

Key Messages Young people involved with PF have local ‘knowledges’ of the neighbourhoods in which projects operate which is based on their own experiences, as well as stories from peers and parents and which can contrast with dominant perspectives on contemporary urban youth. In the face of racialised and territorial conflict PF projects can provide safe spaces. Their capacity to do so is related to their willingness to enter ‘danger zones’ and to build relationships with young people that enable the creation of spaces which are not only ‘physically safe’ but also ‘emotionally safe’

Beyond sport

- The provision of something ‘different’ provides no better guarantee of success than the use of conventional sports.
- Activities are generally viewed by projects as secondary to the relationships built with the young people.

- When sport is neither appropriate nor valued by young people due to gender differences and other factors, effective projects alter their programmes of work and provide sessions which are more suited to providing a platform for relationship building.
- The degree of sensitivity to the issue of gender difference is not uniform across the programme and participation rates can mask a poor quality of engagement.
- For others, alternative spaces and residentials have proven successful in allowing young people to shed their 'tough' street exterior and behave like children in a safe and neutral environment.
- For the most part it is football that continues to have a particular hold on the young people we have observed. This raises questions about the benefits of diversifying activities for its own sake.

Key messages PF projects have been willing to diversify their provision to attract a broad range of participants across different gender and racial boundaries. Where 'alternative' activities are offered this should not be done for its own sake but should be related to the availability of staff with the appropriate skills as well as the interests of particular target groups.

Styles of delivery

- PF is concerned to offer more than the simple provision of 'things to do' and involves using the relationships established with young people to aid their personal and social development.
- Effective projects mobilise an approach which can be characterised by a three-step model of engagement:
 - Initial engagement and relationship building
 - Maintaining engagement/Development
 - Purposeful & tailored engagement
- Ultimately, projects have to strike a, sometimes precarious, balance which involves the employment of a youth work style characterised by the construction of both 'buddy' and 'bounded' personalities which it seems young people are frequently able to respond to, precisely because of the mix of the two.

Key message In the context of PF's attempts to aid the personal and social development of participants, projects need to adopt a staged approach towards engagement that establishes social outcomes as an end point rather than a starting point

Maintaining involvement

- 2419 of the young people engaged by our case study projects in September 2005 had been engaged since at least February 2005.

- A key factor in the retention of participants is whether projects have been successful in maintaining low levels of staff turnover.
- The next hurdle is to develop the capacity, resources and skills to provide accredited training and qualifications.
- The best approach towards retaining both staff and participants is provided by a progression model characterised by the movement of young people through a participant, volunteer, staff hierarchy.
- If an organisation can retain a clear and powerful sense of its values and commitment to the young people it is working with it will be likely to make good progress and to retain and recruit good staff.

Key message Projects' capacity to retain young people's engagement is a factor of both the maintenance of staff stability and a clear set of values which prioritises the needs of participants.

Managing growth

- The growth and development of PF has had implications for projects, some of which have seen the programme shift away from their initial interpretation of its ethos and others which have embraced new agendas more enthusiastically.
- In some settings growth has led to the need for new staffing structures in order to manage the expanding number and reach of their various schemes of work.
- Statutory sector led projects, influenced and moulded by early PF strategic thinking, have sometimes been reluctant to move away from a referral based system of identifying young people.
- Perhaps surprisingly, the most significant organisational developments and change have been witnessed at the newer third wave projects, one of which has perhaps embraced the PF approach as articulated in *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* most fully.
- This projects success is wrapped up with a managerial style which allows delivery staff to manage their schemes of work with a degree of autonomy.

Key message Projects capacity to retain a commitment to the core values of PF relies upon a managerial style which devolves authority to front line delivery staff and which enables them to manage their schemes of work with a degree of autonomy.

Measuring success, 'alternative' pathways and distance travelled

- It is not possible to make direct connections between the impact of sports based social interventions and reductions in crime or substance misuse precisely because so many *other* factors are at play.

- There is growing interest in the identification of new ways of assessing 'impact' based on concepts such as 'journeys' and 'distance travelled'.
- What is important is to capture participant developments over time and the ways in which they relate to or are hindered by project activity.
- Following the lessons drawn from earlier case study research reports, from the summer of 2005 PF began piloting a new M&E framework developed by Substance¹ in order to address these needs.
- Consideration of the many young people involved in the research would suggest that far from being at odds with the mainstream, their values and dreams are largely a reflection of convention.
- Whilst many participants have merely been 'visitors', those that have 'hung around' and developed appear to have benefited from a level of support which is quite simple and straightforward in its conception.
- Where there is less focus on the progression of young people amidst a concern to modify their behaviour it is harder to sustain the progression of a participant's journey.
- Development is rarely linear and projects can engage young people and record development whilst flashpoint incidents out of the realm of PF's influence continue to occur.
- Projects should not necessarily see this type of fractured progression as a failure but as the context in which the work necessarily occurs.
- The journey of PF projects can enable a layered progression which involves the development of participants, staff, projects, partners and neighbourhoods rather than merely being limited to individual stories.
- Whilst the young people involved with PF have aspirations that might be regarded as in some respects mundane and ordinary, this does not mean that they do not require assistance in achieving them.
- In order to support young people's progression it is vital that projects provide access to both informal and formal recognition of their achievements and well structured and signposted pathways into volunteering and employment.

Key messages PF projects should not necessarily see the fractured and inconsistent progression of participants as a failure but as the context in which appropriate work necessarily occurs. In such circumstances the continued involvement of participants is a success in and of itself. From this kind of engagement wider social and community impacts become possible

Every Child Matters

- This focus on facilitating young people's progression through an emphasis on support rather than coercion is now a cornerstone of government policy following the publication of Every Child Matters (ECM): Change for Children.

¹ www.substance.coop

- PF projects are exceptionally well placed to address this agenda and meet a whole variety of elements of the ECM Outcomes Framework criteria.
- All of the case study projects offer a range of opportunities for involvement in structured physical activity and access to guidance and support relating to personal health.
- Whilst PF projects are not ‘crime prevention’ initiatives, time spent with projects does provide a safe space in which young people can operate and in which projects can address wider issues relating to ‘risky’ behaviour.
- Perhaps more than any other aspect of the ECM Outcomes Framework PF provides an opportunity for young people to ‘enjoy and achieve’.
- In many ways one of the principle concerns of PF is to make a ‘positive contribution’ in terms of encouraging and facilitating young people’s opportunities, aspirations and achievements.
- In terms of achieving ‘economic well being’ it is quite clearly a major challenge for projects to demonstrate a significant impact but a small number of participants from our case study projects have moved into employment as a result of their involvement.

Key message PF projects are perhaps uniquely placed to achieve the objectives outlined in the ECM Outcomes Framework

Conclusion

Employing Richard Williams’ conceptualisation of ‘dominant’, ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ paradigms within different social spheres, within the community sport sector we believe it is possible to distinguish between a ‘dominant’ approach characterised by a sports development perspective and a ‘residual’ approach whose legacy derives from the Victorian Rational Recreation and Muscular Christianity movements. This leaves the social inclusion and community development approach espoused by PF as a new ‘emergent’ force.

Whilst we are inclined towards the representation of PF as an emergent influence, which is increasingly likely to assume a dominant position, this cannot be claimed in any complete and uniform sense. Rather it may be possible *within* the PF programme to identify a further battle for hegemonic authority between a range of influences which will help to determine the future direction of the programme and, in turn, community sports practice more generally.

A taxonomy of PF project approaches

Category	Approach	Characteristics
Dominant	Crime reduction	Highly targeted Criminal justice agency led Focused on the control and management of disruptive behaviour

Residual	Sport development	Focus on development of mass participation Activity driven Led by conventional sport providers
Emergent	Social inclusion	Focused on personal and social development Flexible, outreach approaches Community based and led

Whilst we have included a 'crime reduction' approach here as the 'dominant' category, from our observations it is clear that the community development approach is the emergent and increasingly dominant influence. Projects adopting this approach have most clearly and un self-consciously demonstrated their success in retaining young people's engagement, contributing to their personal development and impacting upon their wider patterns of social behaviour.

Part One: Introduction and Research Methodology

1.1 Introduction

In our previous interim reports (Crabbe, 2005; Crabbe, 2006) we chose to focus our attention on the process, delivery and organisational elements of the Positive Futures programme. We were concerned to paint a picture of the kind of work that Positive Futures projects do, the approaches that they use as well as the ways in which the various case study projects have been managed and organised. In this sense up to now we have only been able to offer fleeting glances at the ways in which young people and communities have benefited from the programme and how the projects and staff themselves have progressed through the period of our research. In this final interim report we intend to focus more explicitly on the *impact* of Positive Futures through the duration of our study.

In doing so, we also intend to present an alternative framework for the assessment of programme impacts; for it is our contention that many of the more conventional evaluative models are simply not up to the job. Their reliance on the 'measurement' of rather fixed and inflexible sets of 'inputs', 'outputs', 'performance indicators' and 'outcomes' does not necessarily reflect the complex and evolutionary nature of the interventions with disadvantaged young people that we have observed. The more qualitative and engaged model that we have developed has enabled us to better capture the journeys that participants, staff and projects have travelled, for better or for worse, and it is these journeys that we seek to reveal in this report.

Having introduced our wider methodological approach in previous reports we will begin with a brief review of the practical methods that we have employed during the course of this research project and which underpin our findings. Before we present these findings in more detail we will also reveal the ways in which the case study projects' stories have been told to date through a critical review of the evaluative framework for PF and conventional approaches to research and evaluation in this sector.

In Part Two of the report we will then present our findings in relation to the most pertinent themes that have emerged from the research in order to reveal a sense of 'best practice' on the basis of contextualised illustrations from particular activities, events and spaces, bullet point findings and key messages. These are not 'results' in the conventional sense of the word but rather they tell the story of what it is to be involved with PF and the challenges that the work presents.

In Part Three of the report we will develop these themes in order to provide a longer term perspective based upon a fresh, illustrated consideration of the ways in which we look at the idea of progression and programme achievement, before concluding with an attempt to draw out what is distinct about the PF programme.

1.2 Research Methodology

In the previous interim research reports referred to above, we outlined the Participatory Action Research methodologies that have underpinned our work. We have remained committed and true to these approaches throughout the course of the study with our main method of enquiry being the use of highly engaged participatory action research approaches. Within this broad framework we have been willing to adapt the methods we use and to draw upon a range of techniques depending on the groups we are working with, once we have got 'a feel' for what might be most appropriate. Our participation has ranged then from the full and active, e.g. playing as part of a team in a series of football matches, through the simple administration of registers, helping to carry kit and setting up equipment, to non-participant observation. Other methods have been employed designed to fit with whatever activity was taking place without taking over or encroaching on the activity itself. This meant that during a football session, for example, informal chats and interviews might be deemed to work best, while at educational sessions it was easier to sit down and do questionnaires. In other contexts, the research techniques helped to frame the activities being delivered through the use of mapping exercises, photography and video exercises.

In general the researchers were given full access to the case study projects, and over time the role of researchers as participants in sessions enabled insights that would not have been gained otherwise. Over the course of the study they regularly attended sessions connected to a number of schemes of work that were chosen to represent both the range and style of activity and the demographics of participants at each of the case study projects. Where possible, this led to the selection of a small number of schemes of work which were followed longitudinally and within which the journeys of particular staff and specific young people could be tracked over significant periods of time. Typically, two schemes of work, which we introduced in the First Interim Case Study Research Report were selected in each case study setting. Within these schemes we monitored the progress of up to half a dozen young people over periods stretching from several months to the full duration of the research project². In some contexts this was more difficult than others since where we as researchers found it difficult to follow young people longitudinally, it was actually because the projects themselves (or particular sessions within them) weren't carrying out sustained engaged work. In such contexts how could we as researchers build and maintain relationships with young people when the project co-ordinators did not.

Nevertheless, on the basis of our desire to connect with young people in a more complete fashion, we sought to engage them in the research process directly and in more innovative and self determined ways to overcome young people's discomfort with traditional means of documentation (Seabrook and Green, 2004:129). Some participants carried disposal cameras so they could take

² A summary of the progress of these participants is provided at Appendix 2

photographs of places where they hang out and have fun, people they respect, places they would like to visit and places that are considered off limits locally. In other contexts we used large, colourful Ordnance Survey maps to talk with participants and staff about familiar places to help young people locate themselves. For those who did not wish to engage in discussion, and indeed for those who did, young people were encouraged to stick coloured post-its to the map, the colours representing ideas such as 'a place which is off limits' or 'a place where I play.' These approaches were embraced with great enthusiasm by some, though not all, participants who chatted with the researchers about what they intended to take pictures of and why those places and people mean so much to them. This kind of map work is valuable because of the impact of space on the social relations of young people. Space is deeply embedded within notions of local knowledge, which contributes to the ways in which localities are subjectively inhabited, with risk, danger and safety being part of the calculation young people use to negotiate it.

Figure 1: Mapping activity guidance



My Map

We're trying to find out which local places you like to go to have fun and which places you don't think are fun. Really simple! Just grab some post its, and stick them on the map.

Pink: places where you like to hang out

Green: places where you like to play sport

Orange: places you are taken to play sport

Yellow: places you don't like to go

Blue: places you aren't allowed to go

Purple: places where you do your favourite things

activities, they achieved their goal and became part of the PF set up, with dividing lines between members of 'staff' and 'researchers' blurring. Indeed we have consistently spent time hanging out with staff at project bases, as well as in more 'social' locations, policy forums and conferences. Informal relationships were forged and communication gradually moved towards a friendly and informal style based on chat and text messaging. This evolving contact with staff enabled an understanding of the routine and non-routine activities in which they engage and a deepening of relationships which in turn aided staff accessibility and their cooperation with the research.

As such, these approaches, which were augmented by both formal and informal interviews with staff, participants and partner organisations³, have allowed us to produce detailed 'thick' descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the ways in which young people and staff have responded to project activities and the social worlds that surround the work. As well as producing evidence which has more 'richness' than that associated with quantitative research, we believe that a sometimes intense investment by stakeholders in the research means that the findings were more likely to be respected and acted upon than those provided by more distant, non negotiated research.

These observations notwithstanding, the diverse nature of the individual case study projects clearly influenced the ways in which they interacted with and responded to the research process and its findings. Whilst in some settings the relationship developed between the PF staff and the research team was extremely positive and open with staff being welcoming and appreciative and willing to discuss weaknesses and challenges in order to generate new ideas for future direction, elsewhere, there has been more caution. Staff at all of the case studies appeared to come to understand the research approach, and appreciation was often expressed for the style used and for the opportunity it gave for reflection on practise but this was often attenuated by the motivations and perspective of individual projects. Where particular projects wished to portray themselves in a positive light there tended to be more talk relating to what they *thought* they were achieving, whereas where there was clearer evidence of achievement the staff seemed to have less necessity to do this. Instead they wanted the researchers to see delivery in action for themselves. The effectiveness of this participatory approach to the research was evidenced in the remarks of a co-ordinator at a new project which has witnessed spectacular growth over the last two years. As she put it, towards the end of the second year of the research:

I have thoroughly enjoyed it and I didn't realise quite how much until yesterday when I came across some potential other [researchers] who are going to becoming involved in the project. Their perception [of the case study research] was 'oh my god that must be a complete nightmare' but for me it's been the opposite because I feel that it has become a

³ A full breakdown of research activity is provided at Appendix 1

two-way process, information sharing, learning experience and somebody else who has got a perspective on the way that the project is evolving. (PF Project Manager, June 2006)

There is though a potentially limited shelf life for such an approach since at another more established host agency which is equally willing to embrace research and evaluation as a means of improving delivery, the commitment to the contribution of the research appeared to wane. At the front line, staff have been incredibly co-operative in terms of involving the researchers at sessions and meetings and have consistently asked questions about the aims of the project, - what it was unearthing and what activities are offered at other projects etc. However, at a more senior level, towards the end of the research period the value and capacity of the research to influence seemed increasingly subservient to the organisation's own shifting structures and personalities, despite the continued personal warmth to the researcher.

In another context we also experienced much stronger sensitivity towards the research's wider purpose. Rather than seeing the research as a means to develop the project, at a senior level some have seen the research findings as a challenge to a status quo which they are certain is *the way* to operate locally. Whilst the research team welcomes challenge and negotiation, here, the belief that 'hopefully, one day the centre will start to do things [our] way' seems driven by both the personalities of those involved and the rigid nature of the statutory agency in question.

For others, this kind of organisational dogma has insulated projects from the research findings and the pressure to change such that when the service manager was asked whether they would be moving away from their existing reliance on participant referrals as recommended by the national team and mentioned in previous reports he declined, adding that:

PF was set up to be 100% referral based because we are the targeted arm of the service to provide the sport and leisure opportunities. The open access stuff is done by our Sports Development Team and our Arts Development Team and our Library Service Development Team who don't target young people. In line with Government White Paper – Youth Matters – it talks about targeting and open access. PF here... look after the targeted, the Youth Service Sports Development look after open access. That's why we are targeted, otherwise we would be doing the job of Sports Development. (PF Project Manager, June 2006)

In some respects this apparent adherence to a formulaic interpretation of programme objectives was influenced by the initial forms of monitoring adopted by PF which enabled projects to assess their impact against relatively fixed criteria. In the following section we will review the limitations of these approaches before moving on to consider some alternative ways in which to assess the impact of PF in terms of the journeys made by participants and the notion of 'distance travelled'.

1.3 Positive Futures and conventional measures of success

Until the new monitoring and evaluation framework was established in April 2006 the PF programme utilised a range of monitoring techniques. Principal amongst these was the Key Elements survey which replaced the management information system YIPMIS which had been inherited by the programme from project partners. Administered on a six monthly basis by MORI between March 2003 and September 2005, Key Elements was a substantial document which often ran to over twenty pages when completed. It provided an opportunity to report a wide range of data in both numerical and textual formats but was quite formulaic in its approach. The form began with a free text based general review of project progress which was broken down into six sections:

- Progress to date – where projects are invited to identify three main developments from the past six months and the challenges associated with them
- Substance misuse prevention activities – where projects are invited to outline their contribution in this area over the past six months
- Achievements by young people – where a case example of a participant 'life story' is requested
- Developments on the partnership front – where projects are invited to identify the five most influential partner agencies over the past six months
- Developments planned for the future – which requests projects to identify the three key development plans for the coming six months
- Other issues – where projects are free to include additional information

These forms were then followed by five more conventional forms requesting core aggregate statistical data focused upon:

- The number and type of young people involved in the project and their referral status
- The activities in which young people are involved at the projects
- The main achievement of each participant
- The nature of partner involvement
- Additional holiday activities

In the tables which follow, we summarise the key findings from these parts of the Key Elements reports returned by each of the case study research projects in September 2004, which reflect on the period when the research was getting underway, and the final Key Elements reports returned in September 2005. Each set of findings relates to the six month period preceding the completion of the reports and for the purposes of simple comparison we have amalgamated certain categories relating to the range of activities and achievements of young people. We have also anonymised the projects and simply labelled them as projects one

to six. They are presented then in order to provide a snapshot of the range of projects rather than as a basis for assessment.

Table1: Summary of Key Elements findings September 2004

Key Element Finding	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6⁴
Current participants	61	1140	60	60	623	
New participants	85	6135	60	22	275	
Males	62	3987	20	9	195	
Females	23	2148	40	13	80	
White and Irish	49	6124	56	21	65	
Black and mixed black	1	11	4	0	192	
Asian and mixed Asian	35	0	0	1	4	
Agency referral	37	6135	24	18	61	
Self referral	48	0	36	3	214	
Core 50	24	0	4	0	40	
Sporting activities attended	194	5833	32	39	339	
Other activities attended	124	999	67	19	538	
Educational improvement	28	13	4	8	20	
Awards (signed up/gained)	48	35	6	0	57	
Training (signed up/had)	4	7	3	0	59	
Gained employment	2	0	0	3	6	
Volunteering	2	2	1	0	10	
Sport progression	4	0	2	1	248	
Improved social relations	18	0	3	3	37	
Improved PF engagement	23	0	2	2	28	
No achievement	45	0	14	33	70	

Table 2: Summary of Key Elements findings September 2005

Key Element Finding	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Current participants	150	1493	175	120	1877	1118
New participants	97	956	70	64	605	562
Males	60	728	40	40	416	398
Females	37	228	30	24	189	164
White and Irish	64	915	65	61	180	183
Black and mixed black	-	31	6	2	370	275
Asian and mixed Asian	33	10	1	1	24	21
Agency referral	17	956	40	58	166	562
Self referral	80	-	30	6	439	-
Core 50	35	-	N/A	37	38	26
Sporting activities attended	214	3906	373	433	386	725

⁴ NB: Due to administrative changes at this project the KE return for September 2004 was not available

Other activities attended	86	62	196	244	235	375
Educational improvement	28	13	38	2	50	53
Awards (signed up/gained)	31	3	9	-	50	7
Training (signed up/had)	-	-	8	8	3	7
Gained employment	1	-	4	8	14	5
Volunteering	3	-	5	3	18	2
Sport progression	21	25	18	3	53	19
Improved social relations	26	44	36	14	13	23
Improved PF engagement	20	176	30	19	17	30
No achievement	42	-	33	-	39	-

These snapshots clearly reveal some diversity of provision but also demonstrate some core programme features. Whilst some projects work with large numbers of participants, others are much more focused. Looking at the outcomes reported though what is clear is that those projects working in a sustained manner with fewer participants are much more likely to have a significant impact on a higher proportion of those they work with than projects working with large numbers over limited periods. Encouragingly then whilst the projects are continuing to attract new participants, it is clear that significant proportions remain engaged from one evaluation period to the next. All of the projects also engage a significant proportion of girls and young women whilst an extensive programme of non sports activities sits alongside more conventional sports provision. Ultimately, from these findings young people's progression is seen to relate principally to educational improvement, better social relations and growing engagement with the programme.

The strength of this format lies in its focus upon involvement and personal achievement rather than dubious claims relating to causality, as well as the freedom it allowed projects to reveal young people's stories. However, this freedom was limited and ultimately the reporting of the achievements of participants was restricted to a single 'lifestory' and each participant's 'main achievement'. There is an acknowledgement then amongst staff at our case study projects that this format has left a large part of the story of their work untold. Indeed it was in this context that the case study research was commissioned as part of a strategy to provide national partners with both up to date 'evidence' and a better understanding of the work generally.

With PF being a partnership based programme lead agencies and their delivery partners have also commented upon the onerous nature of data gathering and reporting processes demanded by PF and other funders. This is particularly significant in the context of the necessity of attracting funds from a variety of sources, with one of our projects receiving less than 10% of its funds directly from PF, and the complications created by the different delivery and reporting requirements that come with these diverse funding streams. Some projects and partners do recognise the 'need' for M&E in terms of accountability but fewer recognise the potential benefits in the face of the perception that information has

tended to flow in one direction with little account being taken of project information needs. It is in this context that PF has been concerned to change projects and partners thinking about how they record progress, initially through Key Elements and the Case Study research and now with the incorporation of a new monitoring and evaluation framework.

At the same time, perhaps as a further reflection of the false security and tacit power that 'statistics' can provide, we have been concerned about the way in which the information generated through the existing M&E activity has sometimes been used to justify unverified outcomes by projects themselves. Despite itself being critical of quantitative data gathering, one of our projects recently fell back on the statistics reported on the Key Elements form to defend its position when challenged about the paucity of provision for girls and young women. The 'evidence' suggesting that, 'attendance by girls increased 150% in the 3rd quarter. These achievements have been made through the introduction of several pilot projects.' Another project has also created the false impression of attracting large numbers of self-referrals through the use of aggregate statistics which do not account for the lack of resources being applied to this element of its work.

What our own PAR approach helps to reveal is a more contextualised sense of what is happening on the ground. What it shows is that some projects, perhaps those who are less confident about the validity of their own approach or how it will be interpreted by others, are able to obfuscate such that 'attendance' in its broadest terms can be represented as a metaphor for engagement. Such accounts do not reflect the maintenance of that attendance or the experience of participants at sessions. Equally they do not reveal which elements of project activity are using which styles of engagement and how this might alter participant experience and relate to resource allocation.

At the same time though, projects readily recognise that whilst it is important to 'count' participants, and to monitor for age, gender and ethnicity it is not only the reach of their work that is seen as a key indicator of success but also the consistency with which young people attend sessions. As one project co-ordinator put it: 'Seeing them coming back, week in week out, that's how we know we've been successful'. The PF workers at this project also stress qualitative indicators which are more difficult to 'measure' as the indices of success closest to their heart: the story of a young man in a young offenders' institution whose engagement with the project has led him to turn his life around; the story of a group of young men on an estate who no longer engage in petty crime. These are the things that they see with their own eyes which tell them their work is worthwhile.

It is in this context that one of the points of departure of this research from other elements of the existing programme of M&E is our contention that meaningful evaluation of initiatives such as PF requires a methodological strategy that goes beyond simple quantitative analysis. It is only when the real benefits rather than

spurious assumptions of quantitative research are utilised to support a qualitative approach that we can achieve an evaluation which communicates the social structures, processes, 'feelings' and context in which participants find themselves, and in turn how they themselves respond to such pressures.

Key Elements enabled this shift to get underway and the Case Study research, through its commitment to supplementing rather than replacing other forms of M&E, has continued the process. Any monitoring and evaluation strategy should be able to satisfy both the demand for immediate 'state of the intervention' data and long term impact profiling of both a quantitative and qualitative nature but should not only be about satisfying funders' need to assess the impact of their investments. It should also be about enhancing the return on those investments. With an innovative project such as PF, notions of 'best practice' are not 'given', but emerge out of the experience of deliverers and participants. Some of the case study projects have recognised this point and one of the more established projects has developed its own internal sophisticated system for tracking young people's progression, as described by a project worker:

Well initially we get a referral form from either the school, parents, whoever's referring them basically, the agencies. That will have some background about their behaviour, where they're coming from. So things like, whether they've got ADHD⁵, or they're coming from a really hard background where people suffer from mental health issues, anything like that. And then basically we do a needs assessment with them, an initial assessment that helps us to identify what they want to gain from us, and what they need from us. So we look at, we take basic information like the date of birth... We've got a list of, what do you call it, interests and areas of achievement or goals that they want to gain. Things like personal development, sports, music, IT. There's a section for other, so if there's something that's not on there they want to do we'll put it down. And sometimes they admit that they want anger management training, they'll openly tell us as well. We don't always have to follow the format. They'll say I want this I want that. And then basically work out a little action plan to help them get there. So... the action plan is the personal development plan. So we sit down and we work out from our sessions in the week what they'd like to go to and then we'll calculate that for the month. And these sessions are to help meet the objectives they've set at the top. So they want to meet their personal development, they want to develop their communications skills, stuff like that. So we'll look at sessions that will help them build on those areas. And cut it out in the week. So it's a 50/50 thing. You've got to meet us half way. You've got to go to these sessions or it's not gonna work. You're not gonna get what you need. So that's an agreement. They sign it we keep it in their file. And over the course of the months we'll do a review form with them. (Youth Worker, June 2006)

As the research has moved forward, these experiences have helped to inform the demand for a new model of M&E which is more attuned to the needs of the

⁵ In the main PF articulates an approach which rejects the medicalised model underpinning the labelling and stereotyping associated with this terminology, although through their work with challenging young people projects are inevitably seen as a potential response or 'cure'.

sports based social policy sector. We will reflect upon these developments further in later sections of the report but now wish to move to an account of the principle themes that have emerged from our research in relation to the impact of the PF programme.

Key message: Attempts to 'measure' the success of programmes like PF are inherently problematic but what is clear from the statistics is that those projects working with fewer participants are much more likely to have a significant impact on a higher proportion of those they work with than projects working with large numbers.

Part Two: Beyond the stop watch. Re-assessing the work of Positive Futures

2.1 Diversion v Development: Positive Futures and the emergence of new styles of delivery

'PF is not a conventional "diversionary" or sports development project. It is a relationship strategy' (Home Office, 2003:6)

This bold statement from the PF strategy document *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* is built upon a binary distinction between the PF approach as something which is concerned with fostering greater social interaction and human development and more conventional 'diversionary' approaches which are concerned with social control. Within this schematic, the community development principles of PF are implicitly represented as having more value and 'depth' than the 'shallow' entertainment based control imperatives of diversionary work. However, such distinctions are themselves inherently problematic, both because PF projects are widely involved in wider diversionary schemes of work and because where good youth work is practiced there will necessarily be elements of both diversionary and developmental work.

All work with young people could be regarded in the first instance as diversionary in that during its time of operation it offers an activity that maybe a diversion from other activities which are deemed anti-social. Indeed, the initial impetus behind the establishment of one of our case study projects in the late 1990s was the perception of a major problem around territorial violence and gang-style behaviour on two neighbouring estates. Football teams were set up on each estate, which initially played against each other, and then a 'United' football club was created with players from both estates. On one level, this was clearly using sport as a 'diversionary' activity: giving young people something more positive to do (a positive *activity*) instead of crime and violence. However, it was off the back of this 'diversionary' work that the project developed a broader 'developmental' approach. The football work on the estates was the beginning of a sustained, long-term intervention in the area, which diversified into other positive activities such as music and dance but also worked with the young people involved to develop them as individuals, emphasising critical life choices and helping them to map out progression routes – i.e. layering a developmental positive *futures* approach over a diversionary positive activities approach.

What maybe more significant than are projects' overall aims or intent. All but one of our case studies are heavily involved in the provision of an extended programme of activities during the summer months and school holiday periods. Indeed many are core deliverers for the ostensibly diversionary PAYP programme. For one project the summer holidays do not represent a break or shift in their work, but are instead a busier time with a fuller programme, aimed at

providing for their existing users *and* attracting new people. In this sense, the summer programmes are often envisaged as tasters to bring new young people into contact with the whole programme, who are then referred on to other types of sessions, where the one-to-one developmental work can begin.

At this project the work is regarded as ongoing and annual. Because of their view of engagement with young people as being essentially about development, their structures are geared to this. This is evident in the fact that for each young person attending a session a Personal Development Plan needs to be completed. This lays out a two way agreement based on needs and interests, and, while the individual may have at first been engaged through a particular activity, they are ultimately offered a range of other options and possibilities.

However, another project which combines the provision of PAYP style summer activities with its wider PF remit has struggled to make the same connections. Whilst the project is a core provider of PAYP activities across their Borough they have little control over who is referred to the scheme and, as a result, large numbers of young people are involved for short, infrequent periods of time. In this context the PAYP work is regarded by managerial staff as purely 'diversionary' and indeed separate from the core work of PF with the project manager explicitly drawing the distinction:

Well, for diversionary I would say PAYP is diversionary – everything else we do is developmental, there is an outcome at the end of it, or proposed outcome at the end of it. We don't always achieve it.' (Project Manager, June 2006)

Another PF project in the same region is also a core provider of PAYP but for them the PAYP activities are seen as integral to the work of PF. During the summer of 2005 two of the Activity Development Workers had six weeks of intensive contact with a core group of young people from the area which sat within a wider period of engagement which commenced the previous February. Since the end of the school holidays many of the young people continued to attend PF open-access or 'sit-off' sessions. One sixteen year old girl 'Allie' recently described her engagement with the programme and how it had developed out of the intensive summer programme:

'I started (dancing) last year before the summer... We started then going to the gym with Lucy on a Tuesday and then she said she had a summer group on and asked us if we wanted to be involved.'

Although Allie would like to have continued the intensive involvement that she enjoyed over the summer, it was this which underpinned her ongoing commitment to the work. Her participation began with the open access dance classes, then gym sessions, then an intensive PAYP summer programme and now her participation in the 'girls evenings' is less formal. The girls and young women who have moved down this route do not distinguish between PAYP and

PF and viewed their summer programme as part of the wider 'spiced-up-sport' scheme of work. Similarly, the core PF 'lads' have been involved with formal coaching such as the 'football focus' scheme, the summer PAYP programme and other informal evening group sessions and none of them would distinguish these as anything other than PF activities. As such, the Project Co-ordinator describes PAYP in the area as being embedded in the PF scheme of work:

I see PAYP as embedded. The projects give the opportunity for the staff and the young people to spend a lot of time together and PAYP projects that we run here are not just activity based projects but they are developmental. The kids move effortlessly between PAYP projects through to open access projects on the streets, so we have a queue for PAYP.' (Project Co-ordinator, June 2006)

It is clear though that there remains a terminological distinction relating both to the perception of different schemes of work and the wider principles of diversionary and developmental work which is at times based in rhetoric rather than substance. At one of our case study projects, which was originally selected because of its apparently innovative and participant focused approach, there is an occasional, but significant, contradiction in terms of the way that the lead agency views and portrays the initiative. Whilst application packs for vacancies at the project describe the work as 'diversionary', literature sent to agencies promoting the project more clearly emphasise the PF ethos. At another project, whilst one annual report referred to PF as diversionary, a more recent one portrays it as a social inclusion project which seems to be more of a reflection of the location of the project manager at a unit where various agencies working with young people are based than a shift of emphasis in the work. However, this lead agency has not so much struggled to come to terms with how PF might be different from other more diversionary programmes as never having attempted to do so, viewing it instead as just another youth justice programme.

<p>Key Message PF projects need to mobilise the attractions of sport and the advantages of engaging young people in positive activities whilst using this engagement to move beyond the diversionary and into more developmental styles of work.</p>

2.2 Outside the comfort zone: How Positive Futures influences the use and perception of neighbourhood spaces

2.2.1 Place, space and the perceptions of young people

In the context of the previous discussion, it is clear that the work of PF is intimately and inevitably tied up with both the perception and use of local spaces. Indeed, the very selection and funding of projects is primarily related to the designation of the nominated target neighbourhoods as being within the 20% most deprived in the country or their being 'high crime areas'. As such, and regardless of the diversionary or developmental ethos of projects, the desire to

contribute to the positive transformation of both the perception and use of spaces within these neighbourhoods is fundamental to what PF projects are about. This objective is not merely a factor of external practitioner demands and funding requirements driven by a desire to control urban youth but is wrapped up in the everyday realities faced by the young people themselves. When talking about their areas and the spaces they navigate within them, young people often reflect on them in terms of their own fears of crime and danger. Whilst much is made of the danger and intimidatory behaviour of young people, what sometimes gets lost amidst the media representations of the rhetoric of the anti social behaviour agenda is the likelihood, and fear, that young people themselves have of becoming victims of crime (Yarrow, 2005; Smith & Allen, 2004).

At one of our case studies we spoke to nine groups of around half a dozen 'lads' aged up to eighteen. With the exception of one group, these 'lads' were from the area where the project is based with most travelling no more than a few streets to attend PF sessions. All of them are 'Asian' and predominantly of Pakistani origin but, despite the externally constructed fears of the threat posed by urban Muslim youth, even some of the older participants told of how they did not feel comfortable outside their home patch except as part of a group. The group from outside the area were similarly parochial and stated that if it was not for the PF sessions they would not even come into the area where they were delivered. This pattern seems to hold good beyond the PF activities themselves, with geographical mobility confined to hanging out in town on Saturday afternoons at familiar venues such as shops run by relatives or other family members houses. For these groups of young men, gathering together, rather than being a source of assertive power and facilitator of crime, was regarded as a necessary means to establishing some security and safety against wider threats.

Some of their discomfort and fear is based on the perception of the racist attitudes of people living on nearby estates and their 'mental maps' of the town have a very clear division based on the racial make up of areas. Equally, rather than fear of the exposure to pressures to use illegal substances, much of the conversation relating to territory was expressed in terms of the wider criminal threat that goes with the area's drug trade which is itself understood as a feature of this 'racial mapping'. There is open dealing on the streets nearby and rivalry between gangs from both ends of the small area in which the project operates, which seems to have been born of racially constructed territorial battles over the right to sell drugs in the area. In this context, a local park is described as a 'no-go area' after dark, partly because there is no lighting but also because of its reputation as being a place where 'smack heads' hang out. For one or two of the younger boys, it is portrayed as being off limits on the basis of their Islamic faith but mostly, it is avoided, except when part of a large group, because of its emptiness, or fear of an ill defined 'stranger danger'.

In an attempt to get a broader perspective on these perceptions of space and place, both at this project and at others, we asked some of the young people at

the projects to carry disposal cameras with them, to take photographs of places they hang out and have fun; people they respect; places they would like to visit; and places that are considered off limits locally. Working through the images produced by the young people, along with conversations with staff and the young people, enabled us to build up a richer sense of the backgrounds and every day lives of the young people we have been working with, as well as making links between PF activities and how they might impact on experiences outside of the project and vice versa.

What was particularly revealing about these exercises was the extent to which they further contributed to a vision of disadvantaged young people as disempowered victims rather than contributors to social disadvantage, crime and anti-social behaviour. When asked what would make their area 'better', Billie said:

More things to do because there's nowt to do...There's a park but it got all sharp edges, we had things like tops on [the sharp edges] but people keep pulling them off, there's only about two left or summat and they're really high... and cars just drive over't green...I think they could like build a park on our field cos they've got a big field and there's nowt doing on it,'

Notwithstanding the possible exaggeration with these kinds of comments, reflecting on this lack of things to do Terri added:

I don't like, do you know round [that area]...well I live [there] right but there's park at the bottom right and one up top but if I go down to bottom you get beat up and you go to the top its boring...there's a wood near the reservoir and everyone says people have died there in the reservoir and the woods...in the woods there's burnt cars and that and it's dangerous.'

For others, the disposable camera work revealed their affinity with their environment and great love for friends and family. A number of Sonny's shots have beautiful local scenery as a backdrop; shots of the old factory, pen and scrub land where he plays, his family clearing the garden where he tells of how he 'fixes things' such as his Sister's bike. Beyond these more intimate revelations he also included shots of his scout troupe leaders, as well as of himself proudly holding a certificate he earned with them and, whilst he is not a high achiever academically, he included a photograph of his form teacher who he described as 'my favourite - she doesn't nag'.

Because his Mum is keeping him off the streets due to her fear that he will 'fall in with a bad crowd', Irving's photographs were limited to home, family, pets and PF. Discussing his pictures, he told how he does not hanker after going out at night and that he is enjoying his alternative school provision, PF and spending a short time at school each day. He does miss being able to hang out with Sonny at school, as he is on a partial timetable, and he asked for a picture to be taken of

himself and Sonny in the PF project worker's car, as he said he doesn't have a picture of both of them together.

In this sense, the young people's stories and outlooks revealed through these techniques might be seen as rather more sensitive and banal than is typically associated with the dominant discourses surrounding socially disadvantaged youth. Indeed, even amongst those young people who might more readily correspond with the image of anti-social youth such as the young women involved at one project who regularly drink alcohol on the streets, their behaviour might be read in alternative ways. Although we had the perception that to drink on the streets may put them at increased personal risk, the teenagers reported how they regarded drinking *indoors* as more risky since 'in a house 'lads' take advantage of you more so we are safer on the streets.' For these young women, the streets of their area are regarded as a comfort zone. Unlike the pressure placed on many of the teenage 'lads' in the area, they do not feel the effect of territorial boundaries so strongly. The only reason they tend to avoid certain areas is due to the high police presence, the imposition of Section 30 Dispersal Orders⁶ and the tendency for them to get 'moved-on'. The Area-Development Worker highlights the girls' views of gang related territory:

The gang stuff is a lot less of an issue with the girls. I've got girls from all areas who have joined into one group. So it was frosty for a few weeks but they now meet outside of our group as mates so the barriers are getting broken down. The pressure to stay segregated is less for girls. (Area Development Worker, June 2006)

Key Message Young people involved with PF have local 'knowledges' of the neighbourhoods in which projects operate which is based on their own experiences, as well as stories from peers and parents and which can contrast with dominant perspectives on contemporary urban youth

2.2.2 PF projects and the negotiation of territorial boundaries

Danger and risk are clearly defining factors in how space is negotiated by the young people involved with PF and projects have often designed their programmes of activity accordingly, whether this is to accommodate young people's preferences or to challenge the associated territorialism.

In one area, where tensions are sometimes played out in racialised terms, the bulk of project funding is allocated to an agency working with the YOT driven 'Top50' which consists of almost exclusively white young men, while the local authority Youth Service is given a much smaller share of funding to deliver

⁶ In areas authorised under section 30 of the Anti-social Behaviour Act police officers and community support officers are given two distinct powers. The first is a power to disperse groups and direct them to leave the area and the second is a curfew power to remove anyone under the age of 16 who is in a public place between 9pm and 6am, if they are not under the effective control of an adult.

football to a broader constituency. Whilst the Youth Service is keen to point to the fact that it works on a cross community basis, the bulk of those who come to their sessions are Asian males. As such, the overall project is delivered, predominantly, to different groups by two distinct agencies, with the Asian participants accessing a much narrower band of activities. Despite the rhetoric of cross community provision then, in this setting, young people have up to now rarely taken part in activities on each others 'turf,' or in mixed ethnic groups.

Encouragingly, in the face of the tensions that the previous balance of provision was creating, a residential bringing together a small number of young people of white and Asian origin has now taken place and a football team established to bring together players from both communities continues to operate. The two delivery agencies are now working together more directly and initiatives are underway to address the segregated patterns of provision. However, the previous approach highlights the difficulties that projects face in terms of the PF programme's wider commitments to both 'widening horizons' whilst also providing opportunities within a 'supportive and culturally familiar environment' (Home Office, 2003).

In the main though, across the programme, project staff are keen that young people should access both provision and venues which might normally be out of their reach in order to widen their realm of experience:

We've taken young people out of town, on trips and that, and you can see they've never been out of town before. I took a group of young people to a football match and we were going past some gasworks, you know those big gas things that go up and down, and the kids were going, "oh is that the ground"? But going to this match they knew they were going to a fancy big stadium, you know, like they've seen on TV,' (Project Co-ordinator, August 2005).

However, at one project whilst there is a similar willingness to broaden the range of provision through use of the varied geographical landscape, which includes beaches and woods, this approach might also be seen to be contributing to an organisational comfort zone. Here, the PF staff do not perceive any of the areas in which they work as 'no-go-zones' and feel safe working in them. Rather than being a product of familiarity, this easiness is a consequence of a lack of engagement with street based work and an associated isolation from local territorial disputes and a lack of willingness to address territorialism when it arises. When asked to comment on the 'no-go zones' and how the team handle them the project co-ordinator responded by stating that:

We don't really do street stuff. The stuff we are doing in communities is done with community groups, there is no no-go areas, no. There are a couple of difficult areas, the main barrier to an area is the facility in that area. [...] Road doesn't have any open space, but the kids won't leave the... neighbourhood to go to the park on the other side of the main road or the leisure centre half a mile away. That's the barrier, not having access to the appropriate facilities. (June 2006)

No attempt is made then to overcome the territorialism which underpins the reluctance to use facilities in a neighbouring area. Rather, an appeal is made for more facilities which might re-enforce the lack of cross community contact. The physical environment is presented here as an obstacle which cannot be overcome by human action. This contrasts with the approach at a neighbouring project where staff have spent evenings walking around so-called 'no-go zones' attempting to engage with and familiarise themselves with the young people of the area. One Area Development Worker detailed his experiences of engaging with young people on an estate which is notorious for gang related gun crime and drug dealing and is in direct rivalry with another estate positioned half a mile away where PF also deliver services:

I took them fishing February 2005 and the day before me and Richard were driving past the estate and they were out playing footie so we just got out of the car and started chatting and they are just teenage lads basically. Then I took them fishing the next day, they had a really good day even though the fishing was rubbish because it was too cold but they did have a good day and then at the end of the day one of them asked me if I had all me stuff back, cos a lot of the stuff was mine and we were packing it away and I got all my stuff back and he said '*yeah, you know why that is don't you that's cos we F'ing well like you*', so that just made me laugh the first day so I thought that was alright. And then what we did then was we moved the Saturday football from the sports centre... up to their estate and we started providing, to give them a link into us on a Saturday morning. It was funny we started off 12-2 but they like to mind the cars when [the local football club] play at home so we had to move it back from 11 to 1 and then at one they go 'see ya' and off they go to mind the cars. So we did have a good relationship during that [time]. (Area Development Worker, June 2006)

Having established these relations the longer term challenge for the project is that the young people are now constantly battling with the dilemma of staying out of trouble and territorial disputes on the one hand whilst not being seen as 'soft' or disloyal to their areas on the other. PF is able to navigate a path through this tension by providing the young people (especially the boys) with an arena to discuss their concerns in an open and non-threatening environment. Whilst the spaces used for the delivery of activities can and do become a locus of 'trouble', the project offices themselves are seen by the young people as a hub and the area in which it is located is territorially neutral.

However, whilst the project base and the activities the project delivers are considered to be safe spaces, what is more important is the relationship the young people have with PF staff which enables the creation of spaces which are not only 'physically safe' but also 'emotionally safe'. The staff have built up a good level of trust and respect with their core groups and this has created an environment in which the young people are able to discuss 'risky' subjects relating to drinking, sexual activity, crime, violence and substance misuse. The project deals with these 'risky' issues through education and personal guidance

in the face of 'real' incidents rather than punitive measures, thus maintaining involvement and participation.

Fields of fear

On Friday 22nd April 2005 a couple of football 'lads' from one of the estates on which the PF project was working were threatened with a gun whilst walking across the fields which divide their homes from the local football facility as well as a rival estate. This escalatory assertion of power clearly threw the 'lads' normal routines into disarray as possible responses and reactions were expressed. Whilst not directly related to the PF project's activities, they quickly became involved, reporting the incident to the police and providing them with the name of the individual who was carrying the gun.

Despite the intervention following the incident the 'lads' were uncomfortable about playing football out in the open and so met up to discuss the situation. Gathered together in a local community centre Richard, the PF Development Worker, opened up a debate concerning the troubles and their concerns.

'Ok lads we all know what happened this weekend with the gun situation as I know a few of you were there. I think that it's important that today we talk about how we feel about that and what we want to do.'

'I think that it's OK if we are all together and with you to go and play footie,' Ben responded positively before another countered,

'There is no way I'm going over there. Can't we just kick about on the field here?'

As the team stood around and discussed how they were feeling about the incident and the football session the staff told them that the football coach was over at the site and that there were no other 'lads' there. Richard's colleague affirming that,

'The police have told us that they will be hanging around for the whole session because they want to pick up this lad anyway, so you'll be safe.'

Richard then asked the group to raise their hand if they were ok with walking across to the pitches tonight. Out of the twelve 'lads' there ten put their hands up and then the other two said, 'OK then.'

We left the building and Richard walked at the front with a few 'lads' and as we approached the pitches a police van was parked as close as physically possible to the pitch reserved for PF.

The team ignored the police and had a good training session, ultimately appearing to be more distracted by a group of young girls passing by every ten minutes than the police presence or fear of attack. At the end of the session we all left the pitches and walked across the park back to the estate.

The following week the staff had arranged to meet again in the community centre although with their confidence returning the majority of the 'lads' were already over at the pitches.

Whilst it is clear that this PF project is not able to wave any magic wands and incidents of conflict continue outside of their activities, the project has attempted to aid the process of conflict resolution through a determination to stay engaged. Indeed one of the principle aims of the PF programme is to provide young people defined as being 'at risk' with safe space in which to develop.

In some contexts this is about finding spaces which lie outside conventional notions of geography and territory and merely provide 'room'. Several of the projects we have been with provide neutral spaces for participants to use simply as a 'chill out' zone, where participants can 'sit off'. In some contexts this can go together with the spaces used for project activities. For Frankie, who has responded positively to her local project's provision of boxing sessions:

The gym is definitely a safe space. It's so weird, no matter what happens... Like the past year something good will happen I'll come up the gym and afterwards I'll have something to talk about. And something bad will happen and I'll come up the gym. Like no matter what happens I always seem to come back. I don't know. It gives you strength definitely. It reminds you of what you want to do, and that there's people behind you to help you. I haven't really got another place like that. The gym is the only place for me (June, 2006).

At a day-to-day level the provision of a safe space for participants more typically involves the assessment of session venues in terms of Health and Safety factors so that spaces are appropriate for the activities being delivered. In terms of the behaviour of their peers, projects also often employ Codes of Conduct which young people sign up to before participating. These typically cover appropriate language and behaviour, as well as clarifying the prohibition of drugs, alcohol and weapons from sessions. Perhaps demonstrating the limitations of these kinds of programme, young people who do not adhere to the codes, which we have generally found to be broad brush and 'sensible', can be banned from projects for periods ranging from the rest of the session in question, to permanently.

However, we have come across few instances of young people becoming involved in serious verbal exchanges or fights. The relationship between staff and young people means that the mood of participants can generally be read and interventions made if young people are having disagreements. One project spends time trying to place new referrals into groups where they think there will be less likelihood for conflict and, in one instance, they switched a young person to another group. This approach is based upon the avoidance of conflict, rather than tackling behaviours in situ.

In the following example, this more strategic, reflective and non-authoritarian approach is identified in relation to an incident of racism. For this worker racism is not made a disciplinary issue since this can be deeply counterproductive in an area where white young people are brought up with an 'unfairness discourse' that is quick to see white people as victims of 'politically correct' multicultural values.⁷ Reflecting on the comments of participants in an educational session the worker explained how:

... a lot of the comments or a lot of the reported opinions were not really of their own. They're not really of the young persons'... [They're] innocent in a way...of racism. Like the word Paki. They use that so naturally without thinking about it, just the natural thing to say.

⁷ See Roger Hewitt *The Routes of Racism* Trentham Books 1997

That's all they know. That's all they'd been brought up to understand. So I think it stems from their home and their community really. When you speak to them and you break it down to them and you say look you can't really be using that type of language and you tell them why then they're like oh I never saw it that way. And then you understand that and especially when you do know a bit of the background, their parents and so on. Like if they're part of certain parties or they support certain things. You understand that it's not really their fault. It's what they were brought up...You just try to break it down and you know try to be as challenging about it as possible. But at the same time try to explore why they use the language and why they think certain things as well... They get angry and it's our job not to take things personally...They'll react to that straight away. And that's not how you react. You've got to think about how you're gonna... like why do you feel the need to call me that or what is it, what's going on. Get to the heart of the problem and let it go over your head. And then let them know you know you can't be using language like that, that's not acceptable. Because once you've got a relationship with them and they've got an understanding about you they'll take the time to sit down and listen to what you've got to say and I guess respect that (Youth Worker, June 2006).

Key message In the face of racialised and territorial conflict PF projects can provide safe spaces. Their capacity to do so is related to their willingness to enter 'danger zones' and to build relationships with young people that enable the creation of spaces which are not only 'physically safe' but also 'emotionally safe'

2.3 Beyond sport: Positive Futures and the diversification of provision

The *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* strategy document states that PF is 'not concerned with the celebration, development or promotion of sport as an end in itself' (Home Office, 2003:8). In this sense, in recognising that the principle attraction of sport for the programme is its capacity to engage young people, rather than some intrinsic developmental quality, projects have long been free to utilise alternative engagement tools as reflected in the Key Elements findings presented in Part One of this report. Nevertheless, whilst a variety of activities have been made available by our case study projects it is clear that the provision of something 'different' provides no better guarantee of success than the use of conventional sports.

We have previously raised concerns about one of the projects reliance upon 'unusual' or 'special' activities in the context of their use within a fixed-term course made up of unusual sessions which took place outside of the participants neighbourhoods access to which was ultimately unsustainable (Crabbe, 2005: 87). This scheme of work was finally abandoned during the summer of 2005, although other alternative educational schemes of work have maintained a degree of diversity within their timetable. The PF Activities Development Worker who delivers the majority of these sessions describes the development of the programme:

Not everyone is sport-aware or likes sport but these kids are made to do sport when they come here which is why I've tried to incorporate non-sports based issues like the hip-hop, the heroes projects where they can just sit around and talk and socialise basically with adults and the staff (Activities Development Worker, June 2006)

This point may be particularly pertinent for girls and young women which led one project to develop the 'Spiced-Up-Sport' programme in order to maintain regular engagement within this target group by responding to *their* interests and lifestyles. The programme now enables participant access to yoga, dance, gym and fitness as well as non-sporting sessions such as hair, manicure and beauty evenings. Just as with sport, these activities are viewed by the project as secondary to the relationships built and involvement with the young people. One of the project's Area Development Workers described the purpose of these activities as:

street level engagement, its prevention, its mentoring and the primary thing is to be a positive role model... it could be anything... Before I was doing this job I was doing a music team project and I know nothing about music, but I didn't need to, because I got sessional workers in for that to deliver the stuff. (Area Development Officer, June, 2006)

When sport is neither appropriate nor valued by young people then the project alters its programme of work and provides sessions which are more suited to providing a platform for relationship building. This has been a significant factor in ensuring that many of the older teenage girls at the project, who are aged fifteen and sixteen, have participated since the project's creation. The girls began their involvement through the open-access street dance classes. The dance was (and still is) a popular and well attended session but as the girls have grown older and their lifestyles have changed, the staff noticed a need for further developmental work. This led to the provision of gym sessions, 'girls pamper evenings' and the intensive PAYP summer scheme. In addition to the regular timetable, there are occasional residentials, trips out, family group outings, links to PAYP activities and school transition work.

This degree of sensitivity to the issue of gender difference is not uniform across the programme and, as such, even where the *percentage* of young women participating at the projects has risen the figures can mask a relatively poor *quality* of engagement. For whilst as we have argued previously that gender boundaries have been seen to be collapsing in many social arenas (McRobbie, 1993) the type of activities provided at several of our case study projects do not fully reflect this shift. To not consider 'softer' activities, in the light of conversations with participants about their preferences, is to force them to engage with a perceived 'male' norm of lusty outdoor pursuits, whilst to enforce a soft menu of activities based on stereotyping, rather than consultation, runs contra to the spirit of the programme and is unlikely to engage and retain young women. However in the face of the perseverance of obstructions to female participation shifting approaches can be challenging and can lead to unexpected

outcomes.

In order to create a space for young women to express themselves via dance, rap and drama, one of our projects ran a residential, with follow up sessions continuing in the project area until Christmas which were to culminate in a public performance. However, reflecting a previous era of 'top down' 'correctional' approaches, the residential centre selected was quickly dismissed by the participants as 'a dump', prompting some of the young women to declare that they wanted to go home. The fact that it was cold, grey and pouring with rain did not help but the lack of empathy amongst the centre staff for the group was more significant. The manager had given the party a lecture when they arrived about how he was 'brought up in the slums of Stoke' which backfired on account of the in-authenticity of his 'posh' accent and approach. The group was completely disinterested in what he was saying and chatted amongst themselves whilst other staff demonstrated a similarly clumsy approach.

Dance with the devil

Waiting in the church hall for the Streetz Ahead dance crew, they were restless. Some sat down, moaning about the facilities, whilst Emmie climbed eagerly onto the stage and started throwing props and footballs around. She played up to the crowd, driving around the hall on a little kid's car. Yet when the dance crew arrived, the mood quickly changed. There was a buzz of excitement and anticipation as they sensed something good was going to happen; something worth hanging around for. The girls, as ever, rushed to Steph who is always full of life, jumping with them, having a laugh, to find out what she'd been up to. The connections between Steph and the young women is based on mutual respect with the crew and their activities being regarded as 'cool'.

Emmie had waited three years for street dance to come to her area which contributed to the exclusivity and glamour of the activities which tap into music such as hip-hop and its associations with 'street' culture. While the world of hip-hop can be sexist and homophobic, the tunes chosen at sessions are often by female artists such as Missy Elliott. The music's association with 'deviance' makes the mobilizing of respect through 'street cool' problematic for community development, but for the subconscious teenager cool has become a hook. Jackie says 'it's not the sporty types who get respect in my area, because they're really good and stay in all the time'.

Keeping the group positive and occupied is nevertheless a difficult task, but Steph seemingly does it with ease; 'I think she was a bit of a bad assed chic. She can obviously relate to the girls in that way as well. That's just what I've heard, not actually from her, but from the lasses', says a colleague of her engagements skills. The ground rules were set around having respect for each other and not talking when someone else was. For the first time on the trip, the girls attention, and particularly Emmie's, was focused; they were working together and even those who are most difficult to motivate, were engaged.

When the group came back to their accommodation, the slightly frosty atmosphere created by centre staff meant it didn't feel welcoming for the girls or for PF staff. The group had by now been established as unwelcome visitors rather than guests. Streetz Ahead had, nevertheless, been able to create a space for the young women to be themselves despite the backdrop of the centre's attitude and the musty local church hall. One of the Streetz Ahead crew thinks street dance works well as a confidence building tool with young women because:

'It's giving them that structure...It's like with freestyle dance, to be able to freestyle is to work off your own thing from what you've learnt, collate it all up like this and mix it all up and put yourself on top of that as well and then you're just buzzin' and that's your individuality showing right there. Then it gives you the confidence to do other things in life'.

For others, alternative spaces and residentials have proven successful in allowing young people to shed their 'tough' street exterior and behave like children in a safe and neutral environment. These spaces have included fishing expeditions and day trips to the sea-side. Allie described the residential trips as her favourite Positive Futures activity, 'I love just being away with all the girls having a laugh and doing the activities.' Being away from their local areas and homes helped some of the girls relax and forget about family and other disputes. Whilst on one residential trip in Snowdonia, Rose noted that, 'We don't want to leave here because it's great all us being together.' The feeling of closeness and solidarity which was forged whilst on the trip has helped the core group maintain their regular and consistent attendance at activities 'back home'. Whilst the preparation and delivery of a residential is extremely challenging, time consuming and costly they can act as a catalyst for forging meaningful and long-term bonds with the young participants. As Dyck has argued in relation to the benefits that the experience of travel and young people's participation in sport can generate, when young people's 'sport activities begin to be pursued beyond the local level, the logistical and social arrangements that such undertakings necessitate are likely to be compounded with new sets of encountered cultural definitions and distinctions out of which more elaborated senses of similarity and community... may be fashioned' (Dyck, 2002: 118).

For the most part though, despite the shifting winds of fashion and what is regarded as 'cool' in young people's lives, it is football that continues to have a particular hold on the young people we have observed. Both of our London case studies began as football projects and the glamour of their association with major football clubs has been a key hook for the projects in reaching young people. In one scheme of work based at a local professional club where football is the main sports activity, the research team observed attempts to widen what was offered, including the use of weights and playing other gym based games. This required a lot of persuasion, as the young people, who were mostly boys but included a number of girls, actually just wanted to play football.

Whilst there are undoubted problems associated with the hegemony of football within this field of work, this example also raises questions about the benefits of diversifying activities for its own sake and illustrates that this is not always the most appropriate course of action. Where alternative activities are offered there needs to be clear reasoning to support this relating to the availability of staff with the appropriate skills as well as the interests of particular target groups. For instance, the boxing sessions delivered by one of our projects are very attractive for particular young people who may *not* be interested in football. This is evidenced by the fact that not only is the gym well used and busy every

weeknight, but that young people will travel a considerable distance out of their own areas, to attend.

Key message PF projects have been willing to diversify their provision to attract a broad range of participants across different gender and racial boundaries. Where 'alternative' activities are offered this should not be done for its own sake but should be related to the availability of staff with the appropriate skills as well as the interests of particular target groups.

2.4 Appropriate styles of delivery

In the First Interim Case Study Research Report *Getting to know you* we focused on the ways in which projects had sought to engage and build relationships with young people. It was clear then that the PF programme embraces a variety of styles of delivery which reflect the different projects organisational contexts, personnel and interpretation of the PF approach.

With the strategic development of the programme, which has embraced the production of strategy documents, workforce training and accredited qualifications for young people, it has become increasingly clear that PF is concerned to offer more than the simple provision of 'things to do'. Indeed PF describes itself as a 'relationship strategy' whilst acknowledging that this does not simply involve 'getting on' with participants. Ultimately, it involves using the relationships established with young people to aid their personal and social development. Our work has revealed great variation in the extent to which projects have consistently achieved this objective.

In keeping with the long term engagement strategies espoused by PF one of our case studies has been running a year-long scheme for excluded school children in the Borough. The young people attend a PF session all-day every Monday as part of an alternative education programme. This provided us with an opportunity to observe and reflect upon the development of relationships with young people over the extended period of the 2005/06 school year. Interestingly this scheme of work sits in contrast with the projects wider tendency to focus on the delivery of short term activity programmes.

The staff have sought to build bonds with the young people and staff do reflect upon the best ways to achieve this with different members of the team taking on different roles but they have still struggled to develop substantial, meaningful bonds with the young people which has been put down to the inconsistency of attendance. As the head coach revealed:

Before Christmas, you know, when I was doing it on me own, I was trying to be both the discipliner and their friend, but since then with the other staff I feel I've taken more the discipline roll while one of the others can take the friend role. I don't mind being the one who says "no you are doing it get in there now" and they hate me for that. I don't mind so

long as they have got someone who they feel they can go to. I just feel it's a shame that the numbers have tapered off now and less are coming. (Project coach, May 2006)

There is no doubting the challenging nature of the group in question who are reluctant to attend and many of whom engage in habitual cannabis use which appears to extend to periods around the sessions themselves. However, PF projects' purpose is to break this kind of cycle of alienation and disconnection. Whilst the staff appear to have sought to identify appropriate strategies and have had some success in building relationships they would also appear to be restricted by their own cultural expectations and wider inflexible working practices.

The agency leading the wider scheme of work to which PF contributes provides one of their members of staff to accompany the young people on the Monday sessions. Between September and January Jodie, a bubbly young woman who had earned the trust and respect of the young people, occupied this role. She often gave the young people lifts to and from places, bought them drinks and snacks and sat with them during the lunch break chatting and socialising. However the project manager removed her as she was felt to be 'getting too close to the young people.' The removal of Jodie has been to the detriment of the scheme as she provided a more credible source of authority in times of disruption and bad behaviour. In the context of attempts to build relationships with 'hard to reach' young people, the idea that a youth worker can get 'too close' might be seen as contentious and sensitive. In this instance, there seemed little doubt that the closeness was interpreted as 'friendliness' and 'mutual respect' and therefore the workers removal from the programme seemed unwarranted and has had a negative impact. It has reinforced the 'distance' between the project and participants through the formalisation of relationships associated with attempts to 'professionalise' work with young people which contrasts with the more engaged approach employed at other projects.

Phil's role has developed over the last twelve months and he has gone from part-time sessional football coach to full-time development worker and angling coach. Phil's love of his job is obvious to everyone he meets and he often goes above and beyond his duties. Indeed, he recently became concerned over the welfare of one of his regular 'footie lads' and on one cold rainy evening he received a phone call from him on his mobile, 'he rang me from a street corner and blurted out that he wanted to kill himself because all he wanted was to be a kid without all the stress and responsibility at home.' Disturbed by the call, he drove the streets looking for the lad and eventually found him soaked to the bone and very upset. This extra attention is commendable but it is difficult to know when it is appropriate and necessary to draw the line and bring in other welfare services in a context where those services are often a source of much of the young people's alienation. As his colleague Richard pointed out:

Part of the problem of youth work is when they try and be young people's friends and that is one of the major problems. These kids, I care about these kids but I am not their friend in the sense of we are not buddies...Actually this is controversial put it in your paper, they were saying about how do you get respect off kids, and I was saying that you have to demand it and you have to earn it (Richard, June 2006).

In this sense, part of the success of this project in engaging young people relates to the fact that whilst the staff display certain characteristics which are present in most relationships between friends or 'buddies' including:

- Interest in their wellbeing
- Concern over their future plans
- Co-receptive trust and respect
- Familiarity and knowledge of personality traits
- Warmth, joviality and humour

They also express additional characteristics which relocate their relationship with the young people from that of a pure 'buddy' to one of 'buddy/mentor/coach'. These characteristics include:

- Consistency and reliability
- Setting of appropriate boundaries relating to language and behaviour
- Written or unwritten codes of conduct
- Purposeful and developmental aims to the relationship

Through our observations we have identified how these characteristics relate to a three-step model of engagement.

Three steps to heaven...

Step 1: Initial engagement and relationship building phase

- Use of sport or another activity as a 'hook'
- Use of initial relationship building tools including humour and conviviality
- Allowing 'risky' language/behaviour to go unchallenged to avoid 'distance'

Step 2: Maintaining engagement / Developmental phase

- Development of a mutual bond with each young person
- Distinguishing young persons needs and interests
- Signposting to appropriate schemes of work

Step 3: Purposeful & tailored engagement

- Maintenance of a consistent level of engagement and familiarity
- Challenging inappropriate behaviour with links to sanctions and repercussions

- Accreditation of activities
- Person specific advice and signposting to specialist agencies

While the three stages of engagement presented here are not applicable in all cases, the sequential stages are desirable and provide a progressional basis for building meaningful relationships. For Richard, his ability to navigate a path between 'buddy' and 'mentor' roles relies upon the establishment of appropriate boundaries. Describing the process he noted that:

We skit each other, take the mickey out of each other – like the kids will call me Big Nose – and one of them has a head shaped like an onion and I've checked with him, and said does that offend you and he's like "It would be a laugh – but I will call you Big Nose". So, there is a camaraderie there, there's a mutual respect on one level. However other kids would skit his Mum, I wouldn't. And they know they don't make a comment about my wife.
(Richard. June 06)

Therefore, although the 'lads' do have a joke and a laugh with Richard, he is at the same time educating them about appropriate social boundaries and acceptable behaviour. In contrast, one sessional worker employed by PF had displayed encouraging signs of being a good 'buddy' to the young people and was very well liked. However she lacked the discipline or authority to engage in any meaningful developmental work. The characteristic which she displayed which prevented her from being an ideal worker was 'vanity'. She wanted to be liked, admired and looked-up-to by the young girls but this was at times to the detriment of their personal progression. Her over attempts to be 'street' with the girls, with her passing references to her own 'risky' lifestyle and inability to set appropriate boundaries, made her an inappropriate 'role-model'. The Co-ordinator of the PF project acknowledged this and subsequently discontinued her involvement. Other more successful workers are clearly not phased by appearing 'un-cool' and this in turn demonstrates to the young people that they also do not need to be 'cool' at all times, leading to a more relaxed and youthful environment.

The young people need to know the parameters of the relationship with the staff and when it is perceived as a purely friendly relationship then the 'line is a bit too blurred'. While humour and joviality are very good tools for creating a sense of trust and comfort, there is clearly a need to extend beyond this and apply professional distance. In some contexts it is the 'sport' that appears to have the power to enable work to be done with young people and for a sense of mutual respect to emerge. Indeed Leroy's style is that of a very professional coach. He does not try and be one of the 'lads'. He does work on behavioural, lifestyle and nutritional issues, but always in the context of the sport, and developing the sportsman-like behaviour of the young people. His professionalism gives him a natural authority since he is recognised as having a job of work to do, in a way that a youth worker might not be. This leads to a sense of a contract between him and the young people which means he simply has to be firm, rather than

disciplinary, in order to ensure good behaviour. In return, he always reinforces positive behaviour.

Teamtalk

The majority of the football team are absorbed in a game of dominoes. The tiles click down on the table and the game grows in tension as a winner begins to emerge. Those not playing form two or three small groups who talk about who's seen who, who's done what, the night before and the night to come. The movement between these groups is fluid and constant; the atmosphere boisterous and loud.

Leroy makes a point of greeting each member of the team utilising a wide variety of handshakes and discussing topics of mutual interest. He then calls the team members around his table and a hush descends. He begins by going over last week's heavy defeat. He dwells on the criticism and sniping amid adversity that some of group displayed. He states that every comment a player makes to another should "raise him two feet in the air" and "if you can't say anything good, don't say anything." The group respond and accept his logic. Then two players are nominated as the 'organisers' including both a defender and a midfielder. They are given the responsibility of ensuring that the rest of the team are aware of their own positioning and that of their opponents.

The teamtalk is focused and professional in nature. Employing traditional coaching delivery techniques using a magnetised pitch and players to reinforce his instructions, he caters for a range of learning styles. Leroy makes good use of modelling to emphasise his points and encourage the less able.

Throughout, Leroy stresses the importance of positivity, in both attitude and communication. He uses praise and positive reinforcement techniques to accommodate each young person and make them value their contribution, no matter how able they are.

Where Leroy's sporting professionalism does not work is on addressing issues of the young men's life aspirations beyond sport. Whilst the undoubted engagement of these young men could easily be used as a springboard to work with them in a way that encompasses wider life options, in interview, very few of them had a sense of what they could do with their lives in terms of jobs or careers apart from football. This is a sharp contrast, with the work of other projects which take a more holistic youth work approach, consistently emphasising the life choices the young people are facing.

At one project, the jovial, friendly and warm relations which the staff have with young people clearly facilitates the building of bonds and relationships which does not preclude their efforts to improve the life chances and development of participants. Chris is a long-term participant with the project and although he has had many ups and downs whilst being engaged, he recently reflected upon his progression, 'We've all improved as people. I've learnt like who to go with on the streets and who not to go with and we've all got better at football as well and we're more fitter' (Chris, Aged 16). The project paid for Chris to undertake his FA level one coaching certificate which marked a significant step towards his personal aspiration to be a football coach and reflected his own wider commitment to the wider philosophy of the project:

Football is in my life everyday playing it and watching it and on the games. We have started to do this soccer coaching for the kids on the estate. On Fridays we coach them. I've done my FA level one and so four of us started to do this and we meet on Wednesdays and Fridays. I want to be a football coach. I'd be a rock head if there was no football. (Chris, April 2006)

Poachers and gamekeepers

Wandering down to the estate where Richard first made contact with the 'footie lads' it might be hard to identify a purpose for PF. There was no shortage of things for the youngsters to do. No shortage of well drilled coaches leading the kids through their paces. No shortage of empathy and shared perspective between the coaches and the participants.

Closer inspection reveals the *very* real purpose of that role, for the coaches who are delivering the sessions, in an almost textbook emulation of Richard's own 'football focus' approach, are the very 'lads' that he first engaged with the project. The sessions, which the 'lads' set up on their own initiative, are testament to the transformative potential of PF and the influence that it has had upon them. As Chris recalls

'Cos we were doing it all the time the kids were asking us and wanted something to do. So we said we'd do a tournament with them and do four days coaching and we got help from a local volunteer to organise it. It was the kids idea, so we used our skills cos it will be good on our CVs. We are doing it again and we're taking them to Manchester and getting an eleven a-side team to play against. We took them to the City of Manchester Stadium to watch Liverpool and Man City in the youth cup-final. We had the tournament on the Friday and after that we took them on a train to Manchester, they loved it.

Now Chris has a new ambition to become a formal volunteer or worker for PF as he unhesitatingly declares his desire to 'work here'.

The consistently long term, engaged and developmental approach of this project has enabled project workers to influence participants in a whole variety of ways which might be seen as beyond more conventional approaches. A year into her work with girls and young women in the area, one of the Area Development Workers is still engaged with a large number of her 'original' group and has been able to:

- reduce their alcohol consumption
- provide advise on further education and work placements, helping them complete application forms
- discuss personal issues relating to contraception and sexual health
- teach them how to cook healthy food and be aware of nutrition and diet
- help the chain-smokers attempt to quit smoking

As one of the participants put it:

They just talk to you and teachers are just stupid and just don't bother with you they just bother with all the clever good people, that was in our school. The PF staff are dead

friendly just like your mates not like teachers, they still tell you things and help you but they are more helpful than teachers. (Katie, August 2005)

Equally, at another project, when Serena was interviewed for the third time, the researcher asked her about her approach to developing relationships with the young people, she offered similar conclusions:

From the get go really you've got to make sure you have a good...you know make sure you're approachable. But make sure they wanna speak to you, informal not formal because that's where they're coming from. They don't really like that... A lot of them, they got common ground in terms of not getting on with teachers. They just don't like teachers so youth workers who come with a different approach are much more flexible. A bit more laid back, easy going. Yeah you just need to try, if anything be a friend to them as much as anything. But with the boundary and things. And they understand that, when we go through ground rules and stuff, what we expect from them. What they expect from us. Make that clear to them (Youth Worker, June 2006).

Ultimately, projects have to strike a, sometimes precarious, balance which involves the employment of a youth work style characterised by the construction of both 'buddy' and 'bounded' personalities which it seems young people are frequently able to respond to, precisely because of the mix of the two. The creation of a respectful relationship which acknowledges both similarity and difference enables mutual exchange whilst also allowing staff to challenge young people and, if necessary, enforce rules.

<p>Key message In the context of PF's attempts to aid the personal and social development of participants, projects need to adopt a staged approach towards engagement that establishes social outcomes as an end point rather than a starting point</p>

2.5 Maintaining involvement

In the previous section, we touched on the issue of the retention of workers and participants. If PF is to achieve its aim of 'developing' both practitioners and participants, there must be a recognition of this as a long term endeavour, requiring, in the case of maintaining engagement with young people, imaginative and supportive working by front line staff, backed by a strategy which supports long term engagement and supportive lead and delivery agencies who see the value of investing in practitioners.

Certainly, with regard to participants, retention has long been regarded as a key outcome as reflected in the data collected by the Key Elements monitoring instrument. The most recent impact report produced by Positive Futures (Home Office, 2006) revealed that 26,586 of the 46,674 young people engaged in PF in September 2005 had been engaged since at least February 2005. Amongst our case study projects, the figure was 2419 out of the 4773 currently engaged.

These statistics are significant in the context of the growing numbers of new participants in the programme over this period which might not capture the 'turnover' of young people which we have observed at some projects. Clearly this is often beyond the control of projects as some participants move out of the area, develop other interests, move on to play with local, mainstream sports clubs or are forced to disengage through detention, illness or other external pressures. The key is to establish the extent to which projects facilitate the maintenance of young people's involvement.

A principle factor here might be whether projects have been successful in maintaining low levels of staff turnover. However, whilst the team at one of our local authority led case studies have experienced very high levels of staff retention, with only two of the eleven posts being vacant in the past two years, participant involvement has been less stable. This appears to be because of the failure of the project to mobilise its work around a close engagement with participants. Rather, the project manager views the high staff retention levels as a result of the good working relations between staff and the security provided by the mainstreaming of positions into other council directorates.

At another project, which does not benefit from this kind of security, to date no staff members have left their posts since the creation of the project in the spring of 2004. The stability of the workforce, allied to the commitment to building long-term relationships with young people and partners, has been a principle factor in securing high participant retention (105 of the 175 participants in September 2005 - 60% - having been retained from February 2005). For despite the rapid recent growth of the project they have managed to maintain their grass-roots, developmental approach to delivery. This has been managed through the assignment of staff to small, dedicated areas whereby each worker is responsible for a specific geographical location maintaining the 'community outreach' direction as one of the Area Development Workers explains:

We manage our projects and are *supported* by the manager rather than *being* managed. It helps when you are... around the area and you are known, so it's about getting out there. Numerous kids know me and know the organisation even if we haven't really worked with them. I'm always riding on my bike between parks and youth centres.' (Lucy, June 2006)

In this way the staff are fully accountable and responsible for their own schemes of work and are known by many of the local young people and residents. Maintaining good relations becomes a matter of personal pride and integrity as another worker explained, 'even if I walked away from this job tomorrow, being the sad person that I am I'd still go and drive on that estate looking for those kids to see how they are' (Richard, June 2006).

However, whilst the project aims to provide long-term engagement for their participants and to widen their life skills and opportunities, to date they have been

better at engaging than developing. The project has managed to retain many of their existing participants, with a large number of young people being involved for over a year. The next hurdle is to develop the capacity, resources and skills to provide more accredited training and qualifications for these young people. A variety of accredited schemes are in the pipeline. The project has had its initial ASDAN screening and visit and they are awaiting their registration number to enable them to be ASDAN providers. The 'Spiced-Up-Sport' module is currently being assessed by the Open College Network, in order to receive accreditation and the Get-Hooked on Fishing modules are also receiving formal accreditation. The Co-ordinator hopes to attract funding to recruit a full-time trained teacher to concentrate on the accredited-educational aspect of their work. In the meantime, the staff use pragmatic approaches to widening access to education and employment.

At another voluntary sector led project, where there is a long term commitment to developing engaged outreach modes of contact with young people, the approach has been undermined by high rates of staff turnover. During the research period 3.5 members of staff have left despite this being the maximum staff compliment for the project as a whole. The project has also lost sessional staff and, after the cessation of partnership working with the YIP, it lost access to their workers. Changes to the structure of the host agency have also contributed to the loss of administrative support to the project. The reasons for the high rates of staff loss are multiple and complex. With a Manager who accepts the inevitability of the situation and who, having himself made the transition from front line delivery, has not always managed to delegate effectively leading to the perception of an abrasive, micro managerial style, coupled with structural changes and demanding workloads this trend may well continue. This is of concern, since PF is about relationship building and if young people do not have a familiar face at sessions, someone who has a feel for their personality, engagement and development, they may more easily drift away and their story be lost. Indeed, it is precisely the building of close personal relations with participants that is most likely to retain young people's involvement, as in the case of Mary, at one of our projects that has been more successful in retaining participants.

Mary, Mary, quite contrary

At the start of the research Mary was deemed to be a high risk by the group which identifies participants to be targeted by the project. For her own part she lets you think whatever you want to think about her. If she is tagged as a bad girl by some, she lets them roll with that idea. If she is told how well she is doing, how much her behaviour and skills have improved, she loves that too. On a final warning after an offence of criminal damage, she was referred to PF by the YOT in mid 2004.

Haley, her project worker, feels that she has a slightly unwarranted reputation and urges 'don't believe the hype'.

After ascertaining that she loves football, rugby and outdoor pursuits, she was placed in a multi activity group. She had difficulty interacting with peers and staff when she first came, but now

works well with participants of both sexes having remained a regular attender throughout the research period.

During early one to ones Haley traced some of her anger and insularity to a bereavement which has enabled her and her Mother to address the issue and contributed to an improvement in their relationship. Staff still feel that her anger is an issue though and that she needs to continue developing coping strategies, as towards the end of 2005 there were still reports of her causing disruption in the community but assessments indicates that her behaviour at home and school has improved since her engagement with PF.

In September 2006, the project plans to disengage from her 'not because [she's] done anything wrong, but [because she doesn't] need to be here any more. [She's] really improved,' despite the fact that she is still deemed high risk and on the Top 50 list.

It is the high level of staff retention at this project that gives workers the time to form relationships with participants, and Hayley's work with Mary is an example of this.

Ultimately, whilst some staff in the sector have their reservations, we are largely convinced that the best approach towards retaining both staff and participants is provided by a progression model which has been employed at varying stages of development by a number of projects. One of these has had a policy of recruiting young people who started off as volunteers or users at sessions, alongside specialist staff who are recruited through more traditional means which we review in more detail in Part Three of this report. It is striking that at this project the greatest success in retaining staff over many years has been amongst those who are 'homegrown'. It is also striking that specialist staff recruited in from 'outside' have tended (with significant exceptions) not to remain with the organisation for particularly long periods. This relative lack of retention of specialist staff has at times created problems for the project, as skills crucial to delivering the wide range of schemes the organisation has committed to can be lost, and 'homegrown' staff are often thrust into positions for which they are still developing these skills. There are many who see this as a strength though, as many staff members need fresh challenges after a few years whilst the subsequent arrival of new staff can bring an impetus of energy and new ideas.

The situation is only really problematic if *nobody* stays very long. However this is most likely to reflect a wider problem associated with the priorities and values of the lead agency. If an organisation can retain a clear and powerful sense of its values and commitment to the young people it is working with it will be likely to make good progress and to retain and recruit good staff. Indeed in the context of this case study the successful retention of 'homegrown' workers *has* enabled the project to retain its ability to reach out to and maintain the involvement of the young people they target.

Amongst users there are inevitably young people who come and go, some because they did not feel confident in their own ability or felt marginalised by the competitive atmosphere, there are also a significant number who carry on using project services year in year out. Many of these people spoke of 'growing up' with or within the project. Indeed, many spoke of it as a 'family'. Although most felt

that they would eventually leave to pursue a career in youth or community work or a related area, many found it difficult to imagine making this step. 'I still have so much I can achieve here' was a common statement. 'It's a place where I'm still developing and growing.' 'I can imagine a point when I have progressed enough to leave, but it's a long way off.' Only one expressed a definite sense that they welcomed entering a world beyond the project. While this is an enormous testimony to the project's ethos – the way it creates a sense of family amongst workers, which is passed on to users – it also marks a limit to the model. If progression routes are provided, but no exit routes, they either have to constantly generate new work, by finding new funding opportunities and delivering in new areas, or it stifles its staff, stopping their horizons from expanding naturally.

This tension can also extend to participants, particularly where friendship networks build up around steady involvement in a team. Since while getting young people involved is something to be done 'with the grain' of their social worlds, and people will keep coming if all their mates do too, this can be limiting, and in extreme cases can reinforce an insider/outsider view of the world. As Eddie says, it can get too comfortable, making it hard to make the next step to something different.' Why go off to a new team, where you don't know anyone, when you can keep with this one?' As such, senior management have been keen to continue opening new pathways / exit routes by forging relationships with other companies and organisations willing to take on their young people. They are also aware that while many are interested in youth / community work and sports coaching, there are others who are not and want to pursue careers in creative industries such as music.

<p>Key message Projects' capacity to retain young people's engagement is a factor of both the maintenance of staff stability and a clear set of values which prioritises the needs of participants</p>

2.6 'Keepin' it real': Managing growth and protecting project integrity

As PF has grown as a programme, it has evolved both in terms of scale and strategic direction. Where once it was purely experimental, with the learning that has emerged, it now demands much of the agencies that lead projects. It asks them, at a delivery level, to engage with young people whom a number of mainstream agencies have failed to engage or keep engaged, and then to draw them gradually back to the mainstream. They are asked to do patient, incremental work with young people that may only yield small and unquantifiable outcomes, against a political backdrop which continues to propagate myths about the power of such projects to impact directly on crime. At a strategic level, it emphasises its difference from other programmes of work whilst, simultaneously, making itself a non-threatening enough proposition to engage mainstream partners. This has had implications for individual projects, some of which have

seen the programme shift away from their initial interpretation of its ethos and others of which have embraced new agendas more enthusiastically.

The longest standing project has been operating for nearly a decade, initially outside of the auspices of PF. As such, in that time it has evolved its own identity and ethos that stands alone from the programme. It has developed models of working with young people that are seen to be successful, are being replicated in new areas and adapted to new activities. This model, whereby engagement leads onto development, is essentially congruous with the official PF approach. This means that PF is in many ways an ideal funder. However, PF is only one of the organisation's funders, which means that the organisation needs to perform to other agendas. Whilst having greater resources and possibly greater future security this also means that it isn't shaped by a single funder, and has its own identity.

Indeed, the project has grown in ways that would have been unforeseeable ten years ago when its first employee ran football sessions on estates from the boot of his car. It now employs over 30 staff and has spread geographically miles in every direction from its 'home' on a housing estate. Today some of its first users are experienced members of the staff team. This growth and expansion has not always been easy, and has required a willingness to balance the project's own ideals with the requirements and expectations of partner organisations.

In part, these tensions also relate to the particularities of working in a major urban conurbation whereby although young people's geographies can be very circumscribed and pinned down, the education system means that young people might be travelling several miles to go to school; there are high levels of residential 'churn', with people moving in and out of inner city areas; intense physical regeneration schemes mean that estates are being demolished and their residents 'decanted' over long distances. All of this means it can be very hard for locally based programmes to identify stable groups of young people to work with over a sustained period. Our observations suggest that it *is* possible, but only by starting off very small and working very deeply in a tightly defined area, incrementally increasing the delivery area, estate by estate.

In this context the organizational growth of the project has led to the need for new staffing structures in order to manage the expanding number and reach of their various schemes of work. This involved the creation of a middle strata of management with specific responsibilities and new staff members who have not necessarily been as committed to the organisation as those who had come up through it, and therefore there has been a higher turnover of staff. This has resulted in less consistency than is desirable, but the situation appears to have found a level of stability again and overall, while project growth has presented new challenges, the actual work with young people across venues and areas, continues to maintain its primary focus.

Interestingly, this pathway contrasts with that of projects which joined PF during the second phase of development and that are hosted by statutory sector agencies. These projects have been influenced and moulded by the very early PF strategic thinking, which in some contexts utilised the idea of Top-50 and targeted referral based models. At these projects there has been a reluctance to move away from a referral based system of identifying young people. There has been some movement towards longer-term, sustainable programmes but the conceptualisation that the work of PF is to work with '*identified* at-risk young people' has been taken quite literally. As such, they have been reluctant to engage in the kind of outreach work that has been demonstrated to work in other contexts. Indeed, the expectations placed upon one of our projects by the range of funders and partner agencies beyond the central PF team are very much in line with what the project delivers - that is to provide sports-based, developmental activities for at-risk referred young people. As far as the wider partnership is concerned the project is not expected to deliver outreach, street-based sessions or to engage with wider regeneration or family concerns. As such, there is little reason to innovate or to go the extra mile that PF has sought. Another has preferred to regard the whole PF initiative as just another youth justice intervention to be shaped and monitored according to familiar principles and bureaucracies.

At another second phase project, led by a voluntary agency which sees its work as being 'different' from that provided by other local agencies, the pressure of commissioners can still bring a heavy influence to bear. Whilst front line workers may converse with young people about their needs and desires, at a more senior level, the decision has ultimately been taken to widen the focus of the project, geographically and in terms of its content, to focus on IT and new media. With no steering group to guide or constrain the project, the lead agency is now more susceptible to the desires of powerful commissioning agents and the wider agencies own strategic priorities, rather than those of PF.

Perhaps surprisingly, the most significant organisational developments and change have been witnessed at the newer third wave projects. Organisational tension played a big part at one of the projects which was initially conceived as a partnership between a local drug service and a professional football club's community department. In the end, the partnership collapsed as a result of seemingly irreconcilable differences of approach and financial management. Now, instead of the drug service receiving the PF funding on behalf of both partners, they are each given a direct share. In many ways this hasn't changed the ways in which the work is delivered but it has meant that there is less negotiation and less shared work.

Over time the elements of the project delivered through the football club have tightened their focus, with a move away from schools-based sessions to estate-based sessions where the football coaches deliver high quality football sessions, and partners deliver educational workshops to the same young people on the

topics that affect them – drugs, weapons, careers, etc. Young people engaged through this intensive estates work are then opened up to a variety of exit routes, including football-based exit strategies within the football club’s community scheme, and other exit routes through partner agencies. Within this model then, the football, and the glamour of the Club brand, are used as a hook to engage young people in a further education programme which has helped to develop wider programmes of partnership working within the Borough.

Our final case study has perhaps embraced the PF approach as articulated in *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* most fully. Their approach has from the start been to engage with young people by going out on to the streets and delivering open access events and then, through that engagement, building wider programmes of activity and provision. This approach has led to the rapid growth of the project and the achievement of the initial long-term aim of having a dedicated worker in each of their target six wards. Indeed, the project now carries a heavy weight of expectations on its shoulders. These expectations come from local partners, community groups, parents, young people and most notably, themselves. For the project has transformed itself from being a provider of sports-based social inclusion schemes for young people into a conduit for channelling funding streams into the area for a variety of other social regenerative purposes.

The rapid growth has resulted in the emergence of local tensions whilst also revealing the redundancy of more conventional approaches to this area of work. Whilst PF staff regularly engage with young people living in the so called ‘no-go zones’ of the city and have a policy of operating during evenings and at weekends, at a recent ‘Strategic Implementation Group for Young People’ (16/05/06) a worker from a local community centre openly criticised the Youth Service for their lack of presence. The Youth Service representative defended their stance stating that, ‘The police won’t go in there so why should our team?’ Adding, ‘we only work until 6pm.’ In this context, it is increasingly the PF project that is helping to establish the strategic direction of services targeted at disadvantaged youth in the city. The capacity to perform this role, whilst maintaining the delivery of high quality engaged provision, is wrapped up with a managerial style which allows the Area Development Workers to manage their schemes of work with a degree of autonomy. This enables the Co-ordinator to devise and lead the strategic direction of the project, secure additional funding and remain involved in the wider partnership structure whilst keeping a handle on internal project developments by attending delivery sessions without responsibility for their content.

<p>Key message Projects capacity to retain a commitment to the core values of PF relies upon a managerial style which devolves authority to front line delivery staff and which enables them to manage their schemes of work with a degree of autonomy</p>

Part Three: Rethinking progress and achievement

3.1 What's the 'problem'?

If we are to disregard conventional measures of success for programmes like PF and better understand their impact, it is first of all necessary to gain a clearer perspective of what they are trying to achieve and the nature of the young people they are targeting. For the most part, in order to attend PF, even those who self refer must fit a certain criteria, one which defines them as being marginalised or 'at risk' in some way. This terminology which extends across the field of work focused on tackling social exclusion should remind us that, rather than necessarily being 'the problem', participants are themselves vulnerable, potential *victims* of circumstance and according to government sponsored research are often the principle victims of violent crimes (Yarrow, 2005; Smith & Allen, 2004).

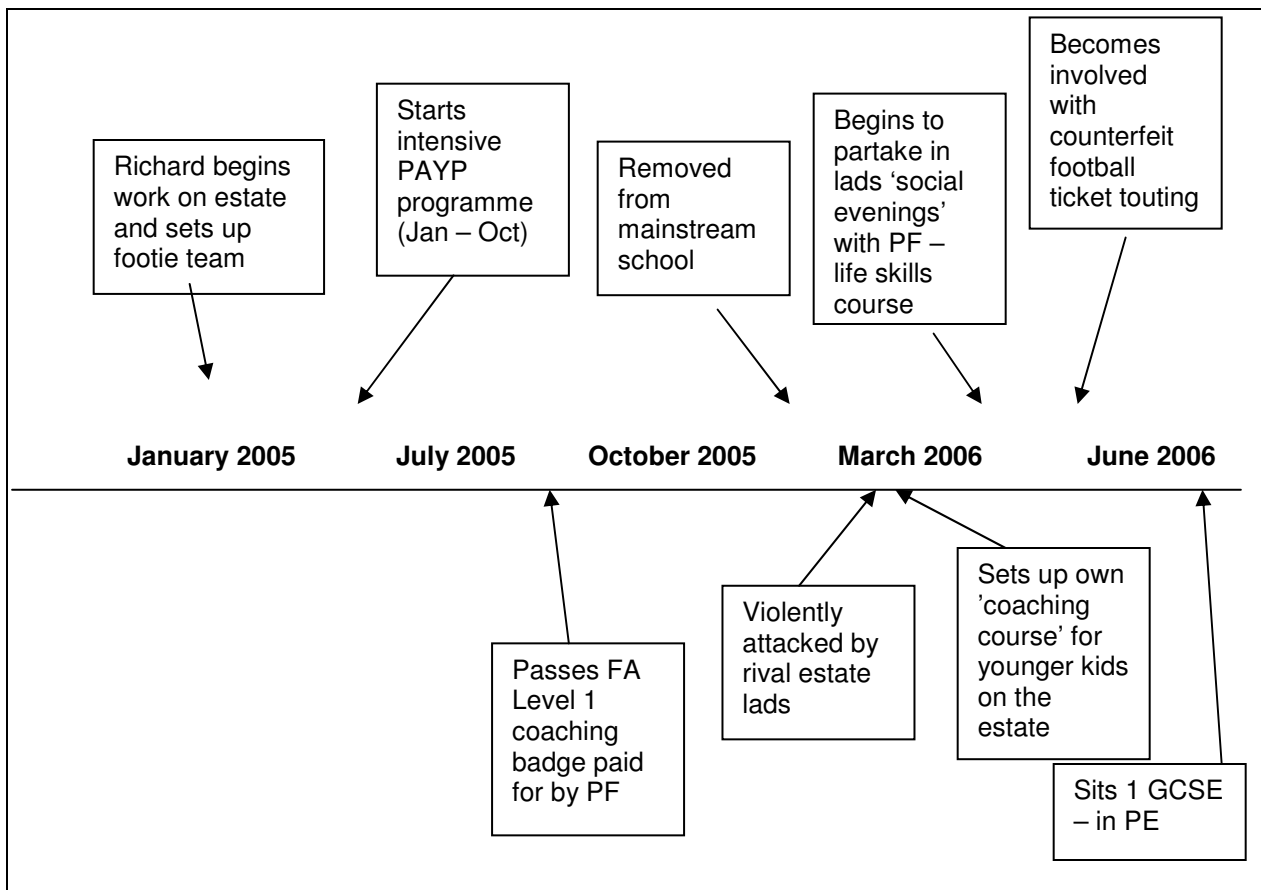
Indeed research (Furlong & Cartmel 1997) has found that through a variety of social changes not only have young people's lives become increasingly complex and insecure, but that the period of transition between dependent 'childhood' to independent 'adulthood' has lengthened. Furlong and Cartmel say that young people are particularly susceptible during these delayed transitional periods as they are 'being denied a chance to become 'stakeholders' in their society and in turn they look for alternative sources of satisfaction, some of which carry health risks or make them more vulnerable to police surveillance and arrest.' In this context adolescence can be seen as a 'window of risk' in a society where rapidity of change and risk have become integral to the functioning of social institutions and processes (Beck, 1992). Furlong and Cartmel suggest that 'individuals are forced to negotiate a set of risks which impinge on all aspects of their daily lives, yet the intensification of individualism means that crises are perceived as individual shortcomings rather than the outcome of processes which are largely outside the control of individuals'.

Indeed, it is often easier for such institutions to identify and understand social problems through the construction of pariah figures who are located 'out there' and away from mainstream 'respectable' society. This approach enables 'us' to reduce criminological problems to classifications of people or 'categories of menace' which invokes the tacit assumption that the world 'out there' is unsafe, making it necessary 'to continuously scan and assess public and private spaces in terms of potential threats by other people' (Lianos & Douglas, 2000:111). The difficulty with such perspectives from our position is that it is not possible to make direct connections between the impact of sports based social interventions such as PF and reductions in crime or substance misuse precisely because so many *other* factors are at play than the young people themselves.

Chris provides us with a good example of the casual way in which young people can become involved in seemingly innocent illicit criminal activity in the absence of more 'legitimate' avenues to financial success. As Chris's time-line below

demonstrates his engagement with PF has been long standing and consistent. Having initially been engaged on his estate by the outreach worker, he is a well mannered and friendly young man who has an excellent relationship with the PF team. It is not unusual to see him just ‘hanging-out’ in the PF office and through this involvement he has voluntarily established his own ‘mini PF’ programme of work with young ‘lads’ on his estate. Yet the entrepreneurial skills he has developed have more recently been put to less legitimate use through his involvement in selling counterfeit football match tickets. With little understanding of the potential consequences of being caught he explained that, ‘there is this guy we know, this smack head, [who] makes up the tickets, we sell them. We make up to £75 per ticket. You just hang around outside [the stadium] and sell them to Chinese people and Swedish people. We buy them for a tenner. He’ll make fifty and we buy however many we can.’

Figure 3: Chris’s Time-Line



The journeys young people make are not just complex but often non-linear. By this we mean that participants will engage, drift off and then perhaps re-engage. Also they do not necessarily follow prescribed routes, and therefore adaptability in working with them and longevity in trying to analyse or chart any progress is vital. It is often only with hindsight that real impacts are revealed, and the

multifarious routes become apparent, complete with dead ends, bridges, blind alleys, and sudden gateways. As we have seen with Chris, the story is often complex and apparently contradictory. Since his involvement in the project he has engaged well, earned new qualifications and taken on community leadership roles. Alongside this 'progress', he has been excluded from school and become involved in violent inter-estate conflict and the counterfeit ticket trade. As such, he can be viewed through many different lenses which might offer up rather different conclusions as to the kind of young man he is and his future potential. Within this range of perspectives it is clear that PF provides a stabilising and purposeful influence.

The bulk of those who engage with the principle service provider for another of our case study projects, which is led by a statutory criminal justice agency, have already had their 'status' at the project defined by external agencies. By the time PF is considered as an option, the young people are usually already known to these agencies. PF becomes something of a last resort providing a service they find hard to define, but which is intended to make the 'targets' more 'manageable'. In this sense there is the danger that what interventions of this type are attempting to do is to 'reclassify' participants in accordance with moral and cultural norms more in tune with the 'mainstream'.

Although a more informal street dance session has recently been established, at this project disciplined and conventional variants of music and dance activity are more typically made available to female participants. The sessions are strongly driven, in terms of their curriculum and staff attitudes, by traditional ideas of femininity and female appropriate behaviour, because these participants wider conduct has been defined by external agencies as problematic. Alongside a viewing of them as vulnerable then, runs a strong 'disciplinary' element, based around the desire to create 'nice girls' and address this problematic behaviour. In this context, for these participants PF is not an arena of freedom and negotiation. It is one which is restrictive and which encourages them to comport themselves against standards defined not by the cadences of their lives and the values of their localities, but by agencies who have identified their neighbourhoods and behaviour as problematic.

Girls at these sessions are frequently encouraged not to swear and not to dress in a boyish or provocative manner by staff who, whilst expressing sympathy with their often chaotic and challenging lives, feel the girls need to 'learn the occulted ways of the clan of the middle class', (Foote, 2003:4) or at least the 'respectable' working class with which they have more affinity. Their behaviour, their dress, their manner of speaking is deemed by *practitioners* as not 'classy'. Project workers here are revealing their own dispositions, evaluatory mechanisms and anxieties about values, choice, agency and personhood. The sessions are an example of how behaviour and activities are sometimes not respectfully negotiated. In this context participants are 'physically inhibited, confined, positioned and objectified' (Real, 1999:139) by the project. Whilst there is

sympathy for the young people's vulnerability, there is little respect for the ways in which they cope with their difficulties. The focus here is not on how remarkably modest and mundane the aspirations of these young women are, or how their coping mechanisms allow them to live in a world far removed from that of some practitioners; the aim of this project is to achieve change, nominally negotiated with the young people, but within a framework which is not of their lived world.

In this fashion, community sport might more easily be recognised as a product of the mainstream rather than a celebration of the cultural achievements of the disadvantaged. It is seen as something which is capable of educating 'flawed' or 'illegitimate' consumers in 'our way of doing things' (Bauman, 1998) which has increasingly proven beyond the community youth worker, probation officer and educational welfare officer who lack the cache of social and cultural capital that goes with contemporary sport. In this sense, part of the attraction of these forms of community sports work, which are popularly regarded as inculcating a sense of self-discipline, routine and personal responsibility (Crabbe, 2000), is their lack of any ideological critique of wider social formations. Rather, it is hoped that, acting as 'cultural intermediaries' (see Crabbe, 2006a), front line staff can help to imbue a mutually negotiated sense of respect and responsibility in participants.

Key message It is not possible to make direct connections between the impact of sports based social interventions such as PF and reductions in crime or substance misuse precisely because so many *other* factors are at play than the young people themselves

3.2 'Alternative' pathways and distance travelled

3.2.1 New visions of success

In the context of the complexities suggested here and the methodological challenges discussed previously it becomes extremely difficult to determine the 'effect' or 'impact' of a programme such as PF. Historically there seems to have been little in the way of attempts to understand the transformations of young people involved in such programmes beyond the assessment of success as the attainment of X number of qualifications, or Y% school attendance. Accordingly, there is now growing interest in the identification of new ways of capturing notions of 'impact' based around alternative concepts such as 'journeys' and 'distance travelled'.

The relatively new nature of this terminology means that there are few definitions of the term, but Dewson et al (2000) and Lloyd & O'Sullivan (2003) suggest that it is the progress made by individuals in working towards achieving longer term objectives as a result of participation in a particular project or programme. The point is though that the idea of distance travelled is never going to be uniform and nor are the ways in which it is captured. Given that every young person embarks on their journey through PF from a different starting point, we should expect their

travel paths to be diverse with varying destinations, timescales and experiences along the way. It should be appreciated then that whilst some young people sprint to their destination, others will meander, possibly not ending up at the originally intended end point. Others will head back to where they came from and some will disappear or get lost along the way. Indeed, if projects are encouraging personal development and the widening of horizons, we should not be surprised that journeys change along the route. As such this is why it is important that the progress of young people is not measured on the basis of conventional fixed outcome indicators since participants engage with PF precisely because it is different from mainstream provision and the assessment regimes that are associated with it.

In this context it was encouraging that when, at one project meeting, a worker suggested sending an email circular to referral agencies, flagging up the quantifiable achievements of young people, a worker from a local school said he would find it more useful to receive news about 'softer' outcomes, something he reiterated in a subsequent interview:

...on my Positive Futures grid of success [softer outcomes] would be fine. A boy with terrible acne, long hair, wears a hood would shuffle along, his head bowed. He's on college courses with me, he'd snap and snarl at me as a normal response, slowly winning him round, didn't attend school much, dyslexic as well. Decent enough lad, but since Positive Futures have been involved he's just a different boy, his hair is shorter, he's gone and had treatment for his acne which is better, didn't wear a hood any more, he smiles, been on a residential, 2 feet taller, only had to pick him up once. At the end of the holidays we're going to go up and see his mother and tell her he's to attend college in the new round of college courses. Positive Futures I mean he's a totally different boy, he smiles, which is lovely. (Head of Learning Support at a local school, July 2005)

Of course, on its own, such a perception is as simplistic as any statistical correlation and progression is rarely this straightforward. However, what this perspective reveals is a more insightful vision of the range of factors and indicators that can help to illustrate somebody's progress.

Key message What is important is to capture participant developments over time and the ways in which they relate to or are hindered by project activity. In this fashion it becomes possible to identify aspects of good practice through the tracking of participant journeys

3.2.2 The spectacle of the ordinary: Young people's stories

As we suggested above, the justification for the type of interventions associated with PF relies upon the ultimately mistaken belief that the reason why the clients are 'at risk' or 'problematic' is that they have somehow become detached from the values and aspirations of 'mainstream' society. However, consideration of the many young people we have followed through the course of this research would

suggest that far from being at odds with the 'mainstream', their values and dreams are largely a reflection of convention. Whilst many participants have merely been 'visitors', with fleeting contact with projects as they pass through on their wider journey, those that have 'hung around' and developed appear to have benefited from a level of support which is quite simple and straightforward in its conception.

In many ways Andrew's story might be regarded as a spectacular example of project success. Through his contact with one of our case study projects he moved from the position of a problematic homeless alcoholic to becoming a star of the England homeless 5-a-side football team and a project volunteer. Indeed PF staff and project team mates had travelled to watch him play in the tournament in Edinburgh and made a film to celebrate his achievements.

In understanding Andrew's progress though it is important to obtain a fuller picture. Before becoming involved with the project as one of the older participants, he was studying at College and working full-time in the construction industry. Indeed the image of 'normality' was apparently complete with a wife and child on the way. Perhaps he had done 'too much, too young' though, for the image of domestic bliss was shattered by his regular drinking which ultimately became problematic. Eventually, he ended up losing his home and his wife left him, as did many of his friends.

Whilst this story does not suggest the characteristics of a career criminal or subversive, after becoming homeless he soon got caught up in petty crime and became known to the police. He was referred to the agency which hosts the PF project in January 2005 by a hostel worker, after he had recognised his problems and sought support to stop his heavy drinking and other substance use. Andrew felt that if he concentrated on his health and fitness, his music interests and work training, he would be able to address the problem. He registered with PF so he could get involved with the football sessions and began to play in local 5-a-side leagues with the project.

As a result of his involvement, Andrew joined a local team and went on to attend trials for the England Homeless 5-a-side football team. He even hitchhiked to Manchester United's training ground for the trials to make sure he didn't miss out. He was selected and played in the team during the 2005 Homeless World Cup, where the team won the third place play off.

Subsequently, he has become more confident and self-assured as a result of his experiences with the national squad and PF and this has given him the momentum to help him to get his life to where he wants it to be. However, his journey through the project has not been a smooth one. Whilst he is a volunteer, and PF has agreed to support him through a Community Sports Leaders Award, so that he can achieve his ambition of finding employment in the sports and leisure industry, his attendance has been sporadic. Perhaps in keeping with

earlier episodes of his life initially, he was *too* enthusiastic, wanting to attend more sessions than workers thought he would be able to handle, and he has recently found himself in a position where he might not actually be able to complete the CSLA. Whereas non attendance at PF is something that staff can work with him on, with regard to more formal courses, the process is less forgiving and the ultimate sanction is a 'fail'.

It is in this context that the supportive approach of PF proves vital. Where in other contexts such a setback would be regarded as a failure, what was significant for PF was the very desire to take on the CSLA in the aftermath of the 'spectacle' of the World Cup. In this context, conscious of the fragility of any landmark 'successes' they have continued to offer Andrew the chance to volunteer, with the option of gaining other alternative accreditation. They have also engaged him in a drama project, after which he may restart the Performing Arts Diploma course which he previously had to abandon. The project is appreciative of the issues outside its control that impact on his attendance at the project and continue to support him, offering alternatives to sport and assisting him in his faltering journey. The point is that whilst Andrew has achieved success in an elite sporting event, the project's engagement with him is not focussed on high level sporting skill, but on helping him towards achievable qualifications and a sustainable career.

In some senses projects need to curtail participants enthusiasm for the routines of work and tendency to go with whatever opportunities are presented rather than to take the first option that presents itself in their enthusiasm to be accepted and 'part of something'. Bry, an attender at another project's multi sports group, has shown a great ambition to gain employment. He believes the construction industry to be an area where there is 'good money' to be made and does not mind the idea of the hard work that would accompany this. His enthusiasm has led to him being offered 'dodgy work' by a local builder and Bry is keen to take it, preferring the prospect of early starts, bad weather and aching limbs to school.

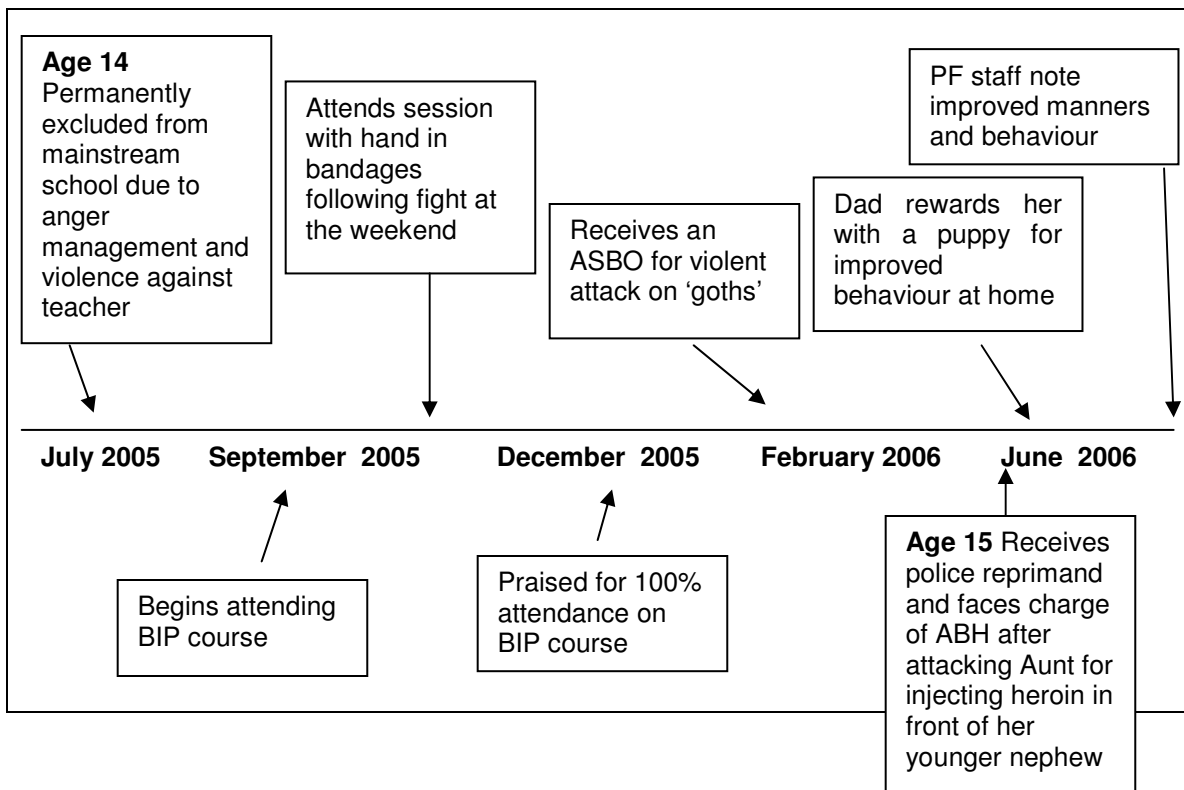
In this situation staff face a dilemma. They are presented with a young man who has an enthusiasm for something, is willing to work, and who is aware that he will be seen in *his* community as a 'success' if he is 'earning' and engaged in productive labour. Indeed, at one session he was trying to recruit a friend for the venture, showing an engagement with the kind of word of mouth recruitment based on tight localised networks which can help to secure jobs in socially disadvantaged areas. At the same time it is precisely these closed employment networks which can form *cul-de-sacs* and lead to a lifetime in low paid and precarious work.

However, where there is less focus on the progression of young people amidst a concern to modify their behaviour so that they become more capable of attending school it is harder to sustain the progression of a participant's journey. The workers at this project have little space in which to explore Bry's career choices

with him or to help him gain work experience so that he can see the realities of the trade and possibly raise his aspirations above labouring to, perhaps, learning a trade, something which would require a sound grasp of figures, perhaps making school seem a little more real for him. Rather, because of the way the project is structured, the staff can only offer Bry what they offer, rather than being able to adapt to help continue his positive development. He may be lost to the programme not because he is a lost cause but because the *project* has not opened the appropriate pathway.

For some participants though it is the project that can provide the stability that young people are otherwise denied merely through its presence. Monica who is now 15, has been diagnosed as suffering with ADHD and was excluded from mainstream school aged 14 due to her 'violent and aggressive behaviour towards staff and peers'. However, having internalised a perception of her 'condition', she feels that her 'flip outs' are often beyond her control, although when asked about the cause of her violent attacks Monica frequently defends her actions and stresses that she was morally right to intervene or act in such a way even if she had not considered the consequences of her actions at the time.

Figure 4: Monica's Time-Line



On first view her developmental time-line suggests a young person whose behaviour has steadily deteriorated over the course of her involvement with PF leading to the imposition of an ASBO, a reprimand and a possible charge for

ABH. However, this would miss the small shifts in her personality including better manners, improved family relationships, development of ethical and moral responsibility and her consistent high levels of attendance at PF sessions which all contribute to some degree of progressive developmental change.

In this sense it could be argued that PF could engage with a young person in high quality relationship building work and record developmental progressions whilst flashpoint incidents out of the realm of PF's influence continue to occur. Therefore, PF projects should not necessarily see this type of fractured and inconsistent progression 'story' as a failure but as the context in which work with participants necessarily occurs. In such circumstances the continued involvement of participants throughout these periods of disruption is a success in and of itself. Indeed for Monica, like Chris, exclusion from school has in some ways been a positive experience, enabling her to engage fully in the alternative curriculum provided by PF without the 'baggage' that went with her experience of school.

Given that social problems and manifestations of problematic behaviour often occur in collective contexts, the story of PF is often better told in terms of the collective experience rather than that of the individual as illustrated in the story told to us by one project worker:

We had a session on the estate, working with young people referred by NACRO who wanted to be engaged in some further education. Only six of the twenty referred young people turned up. As we approached the ballcourt, there were a bunch of youths there. As we got nearer to the cage, we realised they were drinking cans, smoking spliff. We offered them a game. By the end of the session, we had twenty youths playing. As the weeks went by, they started turning up sober, keeping the smoking out of the cage. They weren't interested at this point in any of the educational stuff, but it's a start, getting them engaged like that.⁸

From this kind of engagement wider developments and community impacts become possible as revealed following a relationship building day one of our projects had with their football team in a neighbouring city which was aimed at breaking down the deep-rooted rivalry between the two urban centres. On the day of the event itself the 'lads' had been so enthused by the prospect of the outing that they had all turned up at the PF offices an hour and a half earlier than instructed at 8.30am on a Monday morning. The tournament itself was a great success and the local newspaper covered the event, including a photograph of all the participants with the story.

However, this simple measure of success initially hid the fact that when the article was made public the PF team faced a series of angry phone calls from local partners including the police. They had been surprised to see the faces of these locally 'notorious' 'lads' being rewarded in such a manner and used as a demonstration of community cohesion and peacemaking. They subsequently

⁸ NB: Transcribed from notes, no recording.

provided the Project Co-ordinator with detailed descriptions of examples of the persistent and serious anti-social behaviour that they believed the 'lads' to have been involved in on their estate.

This was a particular concern in the context of the tensions which have characterised relations between young people and the police in the area. Many of the participants come from white working class families who operate according to a set of cultural norms which at times runs in open contrast to the formalities of the law (Hobbs, 1988), prompting the corresponding suspicion and distrust of the local police. They feel victimised as a result of frequently being 'moved on' and in their eyes 'harassed'. The dilemma the project faces then is to retain the trust and respect of the young people while maintaining close links with their local partners and criminal justice agencies.

In many ways the situation represented something of a test of the projects claims to be contributing to community development through its developmental approach of engaging young people which necessitated a response. Things came to a head one evening when the 'football lads' met in the office. The two Area Development Workers were listing all the activities the project had made available to them when Kate, the Project Co-ordinator, made a calculated interruption. Armed with the project partners concerns she told the 'lads' that they wanted all their futures to be really positive and full of opportunity but that it would be difficult for them to remain involved with if they continued to cause anti-social and criminal disturbances in the area. She went on to list sensitive descriptions of their 'alleged' activities, demonstrating the extent of her knowledge of what went on in the area before pointing out that this was disappointing after she had specifically hired Daniel to work with them and develop activities in the area. Kate followed this up by asking one of the longest standing participants to comment upon his relationship with Daniel. To her astonishment he replied, 'I'd take a bullet for him'.

Whilst perhaps just being a figure of speech, at one level this comment did illustrate the extent to which violence and gang culture had penetrated the 'lads' street vernacular but at another level it provided a fantastic verification of the extent to which the worker had become embraced and respected by the 'lads' so early on in his employment. The 'lads', who had appeared a little shocked that the team knew so much about their activities, were then invited to reflect on the fact that all that was being asked of them was to avoid this kind of behaviour. They made it clear that they did want to continue their involvement with the project and made commitments to stay out of trouble in the future. In the weeks that followed the disturbances on the estate almost completely stopped and this was noted by local partners and fed back to the PF team. The 'lads' continue to be engaged with the PF team and have to date kept their promise.

Indeed the extent of the project's engagement with this group has helped to break down the barriers between the police and participants. An eleven-a side

football match was organised with the police where both sides gave as good as they got but the game remained good spirited. After the initial success another match was scheduled and this led to one of the 'lads' playing on the police team, a huge gesture from his perspective. Richard described the events,

When I first met the lads they hated the police, they wouldn't have anything to do with them. So one of the most amazing things we have seen is the 11-a-side match against local police. There were conversations on the pitch, shaking of hands after and then they ate together after the match and got on well. This was then followed up with a couple of games and then the police were short (for one of their other matches) and one of our lads came along and played for them. Basically saying, 'I am playing as a policeman'. And even after the game one said 'you're a bit young to be a policeman' and he just smiled. (Richard. June 06)

The fact that this lad was flattered instead of horrified to be (jokingly) mistaken as a police officer is a good sign that some barriers have begun to break down between some of the young people on the estate and the police. The ultimate illustration of this for Richard was when the 'lads' were bundled off into the back of a police van in the city, not as detainees but as friends receiving a lift home:

And then a few weeks later we'd taken some kids to a football tournament, trying to get some taxis, the next thing I know 6 of my lads are getting bundled into a police van and I am thinking "what the hell's going on?" It was the police we had played against in the match, he said "Do you want a lift?" He'd put them in the back of the van!

Not only have the young men grown and disregarded some very deep rooted prejudices but this was a huge step for the officers as well who previously 'wouldn't stop on the estate' as Richard explains:

This policeman was on his own, single policeman, he stopped where there was 12 lads – he stopped and said I can fit 6 of you in. So 6 of them get in this van, and on his own, he lets one of them wear his police hat as they were driving down. We told the Chief Inspector about it and he thought it was fantastic. And that was a no go area, and the policeman stopped there. You see stuff like that doesn't get registered on the police records.

This story also points to the ways in which the journey of PF projects can enable a kind of layered progression which involves the development of participants, staff, projects, partners and neighbourhoods rather than merely being limited to individual stories. The development of the girls boxing at one of our projects is also illustrative of this kind of success.

Frankie was one of the first girls to ever enter Dave's boxing gym. She hadn't particularly wanted to take up boxing but when she and some friends showed some interest in an opportunity to take up kickboxing through the school they decided to give it a go, only discovering it was actually boxing at the last moment.

Dave was also unsure. He didn't really want girls in the gym. Not because he thought they couldn't box, but because he feared that they would distract his male boxers. The local PF project persuaded him to give it a go and encouraged attendance through locally targeted schools.

At first, Frankie found it hard declaring that she 'hated sports, hated PE, hated exercises. But once I came up here I just got into everything. Just liked it.' Of the initial group of about 10, Frankie was one of three that continued to box after the school taster sessions. In fact she got so into it that she went most nights after school, often until the gym closed at around 10pm. Her skills improved fast and she began coaching some of the younger boxers, getting them skipping, doing circuits, shadow boxing, and on pads with her in the ring. With her friends Cheryl and Dawn she soon became an established fixture at the gym.

We were interested to establish what it was that boxing and the gym environment gave to those who entered into it, above and beyond the direct benefits of physical fitness; what made it so important to the participants' lives? It seems that by attending regularly they became a part of something, and belonged. Their acceptance into this 'family' meant that they developed relationships with others, including both coaches and boxers. As Frankie suggested:

I'd say the people is the best thing about it. The support we get from them. It ain't just about us being up here. It's about our lives and exams, what we're gonna do and personal things. We can talk to all of them about it. That's what I got really, like friends from it all.

Cheryl adding:

They do support you outside boxing. When we were doing our exams last year they were so supportive of us. And even during GCSEs when we first started coming up here, that first time, Dave was so proud he stopped the gym and said our GCSE results when we got them. So it's not just about the boxing. [Dave]'s so into our education as well. (July 2006)

This sense of family also came out in the language used by both the coaches and the young women to describe their relationships. Dave suggesting:

Well I suppose really I'm like a father figure to them... I try to advise her. I mean some kids down here have got no academic qualifications. I try to say you know you've got to try to do your exams cos the old brain is important. You get some bum kids and good kids. Some come from good families and some come from broken homes. But the ones I see who come from difficult homes I do try to help. (June 2006)

The girls described their relationship with the coaches in equally loving terms:

Frankie: They're brilliant. I love them so much. Dave he's like a dad to all of us.

Lisa: They all play a different role don't they? Like Bill, you cast him as a brother kind of thing.

Frankie: Yeah he calls me his little sister. I'll ring him and just talk to him all the time about anything. Nothing to do with the gym at all. If I need to talk I'll just go, 'oh are you going to be at the gym?' We'll meet at the gym and like we'll train do whatever. But we'll still talk. That's what it'll be about. (July 2006)

The use of this familial terminology appears to denote the importance and closeness of the relationships formed, and how these relationships extend well beyond the focus on the activity in question. Vitally, for his own part, Dave sees his role as something more than that of a boxing coach. While his personal passion is boxing, when he talks about the young people he works with, he is clear that the sport is a tool of engagement, and it is through the activity and the arena in which it occurs, that he is able to support and guide the young participants. They won't all become boxers, in fact only a few of them might, but they can all gain a positive input from their involvement.

The boxing gym is presented as a self-sufficient microcosmic world with its own rules which those who enter are compelled to take on. It provides a sense of stability and certainty through its promotion of self discipline and mutual respect which sits in blissful contrast with the confusion and chaos of other aspects of peoples lives even in terms of changes in the physical environment. Dave is continually improving and adapting equipment but this is more to do with practicality than aesthetics. Some renovation has begun but there seems to be a huge amount of politics and tension about this. Dave really doesn't want 'improvements' made to the gym as he is happy with how it is. Others want the showers and changing area moved upstairs but he fears he won't be able to keep an eye on things. This 'keeping an eye' is something Dave does continually and subtly. The impression is that the gym almost runs itself in a smooth unspoken way. But in reality this is due to the years of presence and experience Dave has. He clocks things continually and quickly pulls young people up if their behaviour slips. However, even this is done in a quiet, undramatic way, so if you were in another part of the gym you wouldn't even know.

In this sense young people attend, and are offered training and support in exchange for their commitment to the club and its ethics.

Being up here and being with the same people. Cos it seems like the only thing that seems permanent in my life...outside things change all the time, they always change. Then I'll come back and Dave's still there and Bill's still there and they're doing the same thing. The routine the training and everything just makes things so much more stable. It makes me feel better. (Frankie, July 2006)

Whilst over the past year their attendance at the gym has waned, and it seemed as if other aspects of their lives had taken priority, Frankie and Lisa didn't see the boxing as something they had moved beyond. Rather, in the face of outside stresses including school and exams and the pressures associated with turning 18 and legally being termed adults, the gym is seen as a sanctuary, a constant,

secure and unchanging thing that will always be there for them. For the last two years the gym and those in it have had a special and important part to play in the lives of Frankie, Lisa and lots of other young people who use its facilities. It has given them, individually, a multitude of benefits, some of which are harder to capture and won't be accounted for by a funders' tickbox. Whatever choices Frankie and Lisa make now, and whether they continue to be regular gym goers or not, it is clear from their own observations that it has contributed positively in their lives, and that without it, they would be unlikely to be where they are now.

Indeed, beyond her own personal development Frankie's legacy is that the all-male world of the club has been reconfigured. Although Dave still carries a gendered perspective, clearly thinking that girls should not be fighters, he accepts them in this space. This transformative potential was previously illustrated through the accommodation of black young men in an earlier period when the area was seen as deeply racist and there were few places black and white young men interacted. This history is traced on the walls of the club, in the photos of past champions. Now, the space has opened up to young women, an opening again reflected in the pictures of Frankie and her peers on the wall. The unifying power of the love of boxing and its tight discipline allows differences to be brought together in a space of respect.

The key point that emerges from these stories is that whilst the young people involved with PF have aspirations that might be regarded as in some respects mundane and ordinary, this does not mean that they do not require assistance in achieving them. Just as more advantaged children reap the benefits of those advantages and progress and achieve because of them so those young people with less opportunity and lower expectations should be supported. The provision of opportunities and access to facilities by PF helps them to achieve their potential and entirely realistic aspirations, as opposed to taking them beyond or avoiding their presumed negative potential for youth crime etc. The challenge is to find ways to support that journey.

Key message PF projects should not necessarily see the fractured and inconsistent progression of participants as a failure but as the context in which appropriate work necessarily occurs. In such circumstances the continued involvement of participants is a success in and of itself. From this kind of engagement wider social and community impacts become possible

3.2.3 Project structure, progression models and participant journeys

If the challenge for PF projects is to support disadvantaged young people and communities in making the kinds of journeys articulated above, then it is worth reflecting upon how projects have themselves made a journey in learning how to best support young people. We touched on this process in section 2.4 of this report in terms of the most appropriate styles of delivery and engagement but here we want to reflect upon the evolution of the specific progression model

developed by one of our case study projects. This model dates to 2001, when the Millennium Volunteers programme was used as a formal framework for creating volunteering opportunities for the projects users. The key principles put in place at this point were that young people need to be:

- formally recognised for their contribution, through accreditation and awards
- informally recognised through having the same status as staff
- supported through a volunteering action plan and supervision

At the project there are clear systems in place so that when a young person first attends a session they sign a membership form. One of the things this covers is what other areas they might be interested in or any needs they may have. One worker spoke of going into a new estate where there was very little going on:

Yeah, as soon as we had them hooked, as soon as we had their details and everything and they trusted us, we were able to just spread them throughout the whole programme. Some of them were interested in music; some of them went to the studio.

Staff members also complete a 'Debrief Recording' at the end of sessions which covers concerns as well as any discussions or 'personal and social skills progress'. It seems then that whilst some volunteers become involved through partner agencies, many become involved through the example and encouragement of the staff they have contact with.

Once a young person is engaged in an activity, they are given small responsibilities, usually at the sessions they are attending as users. Often this means helping the staff on an ad hoc basis, building confidence before making the volunteering a more formal responsibility. Perhaps illustrating the limited nature of participants confidence and aspirations, once established, the first volunteering experience can be transformative as one young person revealed, 'I was ecstatic after my first session. I went home and told my mum about it. I phoned up [my supervisor] and told him. I was full of myself.'

The ideal for this project is to then provide credit of some sort for this basic volunteering. Firstly, there is the informal recognition that goes with positive reinforcement from supervisors, a Volunteer of the Month award that all volunteers get to vote on and the wider sense of being part of the project team. Secondly, there are basic awards and certificates, such as the Millennium Volunteers and Junior Volunteers Awards. Thirdly, volunteers are encouraged to take up short training opportunities, e.g. in health and safety, child protection, or skills relevant to their interests with accreditation, such as through the Open College Network, pursued wherever possible. Finally, the project supports volunteers and sessional staff on to more structured courses, culminating in a Diploma and then a Degree in Youth and Community Studies. Those who are still keen to learn are identified to be particularly nurtured within the organisation.

This process fits into a wider 'action plan', based on a social work 'case' model. As soon as they are registered, volunteers are encouraged to develop a personal action plan, with clear goals both within and beyond the volunteering period. A *Membership Agreement* is completed on first contact with the project, then a *Personal Development Plan* as soon as a young person identifies a need (e.g. a desire to take up DJing). Volunteers are inducted through a formal interview, and then a *Volunteer Action Plan* is developed at subsequent supervisions with appropriate review dates when a move to a new level of volunteering might be suggested. The step from ad hoc volunteering to a regular commitment can be a huge one for young people, which can transform their image of who they are and what they are capable of, as another former volunteer recalled:

When he asked me to take the lead in the classes, I was overwhelmed he'd asked me... I mean, I'd only been going along for a few weeks. But when I did it, it felt really natural and I knew this was something I could be good at... At first it was difficult, with my friends in the class, but the young people start to respect you when they see you are serious.

But if this can be daunting, the subsequent step to paid work was viewed by some interviewees as a moment of great pride, a fulfilment of their hopes. Others, however, minimised its significance in the context of doing a job that had already been learned, that they had been well prepared for. 'I was still doing exactly the same thing, but more hours and more responsibility and pay', said one interviewee. 'You're made to feel like a real staff member when you're just a volunteer, so it doesn't feel much different', said another.

In any case, with the process well established at the project, as young people are taken along this developmental pathway, there are always figures slightly further along the line who can act as role models – young people from the same estates, who were initially recruited in the same way, who have been given slightly more responsibility. Because of these role models, the progression route is very clear to young people due to the shared set of experiences.

This process of young people moving through and progressing to become employees of the project, thus delivering in the ways in which they have been delivered to, is eminently sustainable and self-renewing. It ensures that real learning is passed on, and utilises the enthusiasm and example of the 'converted'. The staff themselves can, therefore, become aspirational role models for the next generation. Workers are also very aware, not just of the people just in front of them on the pathway, but also of those just behind them. This means that they are able to spot when a volunteer is getting into any difficulties and provide the support needed. It also means they are constantly on the 'look-out' for talent, identifying young people who could be developed and brought into the team.

<p>Key message In order to support young people's progression it is vital that projects provide access to both informal and formal recognition of their</p>
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achievements and well structured and signposted pathways into volunteering and employment

3.3 Every Child Matters

This focus on facilitating young people's progression through an emphasis on support rather than coercion is now a cornerstone of government policy following the publication of Every Child Matters (ECM): Change for Children. This policy document suggests a 'new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19' the aim of which is for every child to have the support they need to:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

In this context an elaborate outcomes framework has been developed in order to facilitate the ability of children's and young people's services to evidence their success. Clearly their capacity to do so will require more sophisticated modes of monitoring and evaluation than have typically been associated with this work sector and a new monitoring and evaluation framework has been employed by PF to support projects in this endeavor, which we review in the following section.

From our observations though it is clear that PF projects are exceptionally well placed to address this agenda. At a structural level, they are all involved in the kind of collaborative working and information sharing that ECM demands whilst at the delivery level, PF projects meet a whole variety of elements of the ECM outcomes framework criteria.

3.3.1 Be Healthy

All of the PF case study projects, and by implication all projects within the national programme, offer a range of opportunities for involvement in structured physical activity. In the context of Government guidance for good health suggesting that young people should be involved in at least one hour of moderate intensity sport and physical activity five days a week, at the most basic levels PF projects are making a contribution. One of our case study projects has also offered cookery classes for younger participants, based on the promotion of healthy eating and teamed up with a local rugby league club to take a group of young people through a fitness challenge, building up stamina and co-ordination over a number of weeks. The day long nature of activities, such as outdoor pursuits, means there is greater scope to improve fitness whilst 'leisure passports' are offered to participants so they can use local facilities outside of their time with PF.

However, their contribution extends well beyond the encouragement of such activity. The Girl Empower scheme, which has a small number of PF participants from one of our projects, encourages healthy eating, runs a drugs education session and deals with issues of grooming/sexual health. At another project, teenage boys have learnt how to cook through their attendance at the socially oriented 'lads evenings' where Richard combines 'having a laugh' with learning important life skills in their transition to adulthood. Healthy eating is also flagged up at a number of sports sessions, but whether the message is received and embraced beyond the PF environment is questionable, since participants at another project rarely bring lunch and fluids to sessions as requested, favouring a snatched diet of pop and crisps when food is not provided.

At a more fundamental level, one of the key founding objectives of PF was to have an impact on young people's substance misuse. Whilst all of our case study projects have addressed substance misuse issues in different ways, two are based within 'substance misuse' agencies, employing staff who on a day to day basis are able to offer young people assistance and guidance in this area. Older clients from these services also participate in PF as part of wider programme for addressing their own more established substance misuse issues.

3.3.2 Stay Safe

Whilst PF projects are not 'crime prevention' initiatives, as we suggested in earlier sections of this report, time spent with projects does, for the most part, provide a safe space in which young people can operate, in that they are being engaged in structured activities under adult supervision providing protection from external pressures. Beyond the activities they provide, many of the projects now provide spaces which are viewed as a hub for young people where they can come and feel safe. At one project, which works with 'lads' whose activities are in some ways bounded by local territorial rivalries, the office base has created a neutral space and potential point of contact.

Through their contact with vulnerable young people, projects are also able to make more targeted interventions aimed at reducing the risks facing participants. In the context of awareness of the 'binge drinking' culture amongst the girls and young women at one project, appropriately delivered advice on 'safer drinking' and the links between drinking and personal safety have been provided.

At another project work, with older clients includes efforts to use PF as a means to help 'fill the void' created when participants leave the risky 'world' of substance misuse. However, outside the context of more heavily engaged work with individual young people, the fact that most participants' time is largely spent in local environments where projects have no presence clearly limits the capacity to have an impact. For some participants though, PF represents a lifeline. An Area Development Worker at one project recently provided one of his core group,

Chrissy, with a mobile phone, paid for with PF money. Chrissy is a twelve year old boy who lives with his two younger siblings and his parents who are both habitual heroin and crack users. It was decided that in order to ensure regular contact was possible the most appropriate method was to provide him with a mobile phone. Chrissy has made use of this to keep in contact and to arrange attendance at sessions as he welcomes the 'relief' that the project brings from his daily chores and responsibilities in his more chaotic domestic setting. In this sense, the project represents much more than an activity scheme; for Chrissy it is seen as a respite, a safe haven.

3.3.3 Enjoy and Achieve

Perhaps more than any other aspect of the ECM outcomes framework PF provides an opportunity for young people to 'enjoy and achieve'. The fact that such large numbers of young people have remained engaged with the programme, many of whom were not formally referred but became involved voluntarily, points to the attractiveness of the environments, atmosphere and activities made available. In this sense, whilst other issues must be factored in, the varying capacity of projects to retain participants may well be reflective of their capacity to provide an enjoyable experience. We have, for instance, observed contexts in which the activities provided for young women have been driven more by the cultural expectations of practitioners than the desires and cultural frames of reference of the young women themselves. In such contexts it has been harder to retain participant interest and, in turn, to influence outlooks and aspirations. Overall though it is clear that projects have demonstrated great flexibility in delivering a wide range of attractive options. Indeed the last PF Impact Report, *End of Season Review*, reveals that there are now over 24 sports and activities being delivered across the programme which have over 600 young people regularly participating (Home Office, 2006:18).

As the programme moves forward and places a heavier emphasis on volunteering, accreditation and qualifications, projects have also become much more active in ensuring that young people have some measure of their 'achievements' in terms of coaching badges and ASDAN training. In the best cases, this process of development is reflected in the journey that participants take through the roles of participant to volunteer to sessional worker and onto full-time employment. There are a growing number of examples of this process from across our case studies and at one, half of the current workforce has successfully traveled down this pathway.

3.3.4 Make a Positive Contribution

In many ways, at least in terms of the best exponents of the programmes national strategy statements, one of the principle concerns of PF is to make a positive contribution. On the one hand, in terms of projects making a positive contribution to young people's lives rather than employing punitive measures to control their

behaviour, and on the other hand in terms of encouraging and facilitating young people's opportunities, aspirations and achievements. The desire to serve the community, to 'give back', is a key aspect which emerged from several of our case studies. We see the progression model highlighted in the previous section as fostering a very strong sense of active citizenship and public service among young people. The idea of doing 'good' for the community is deeply embedded in the activities young people are engaged in. The fact that young people see great value in youth and community work, a value equal to or greater than the monetary value associated with other career paths, is evidence that the public service values that have traditionally characterised the voluntary sector can be embedded in the youth culture of the inner city.

Indeed, one of the third phase projects amongst our case studies has embraced this vision with added zeal, itself taking on the role of a wider facilitator of community development focused around its work with young people. The projects' commitment to engaging young people within this process is reflected in the contributions that a range of participants have made since they became involved with the project. One of the participants in the 'football focus' sessions has, on his own initiative, now created his own 'young kids footie team' and is working with the project to search for sponsorship to turn the project into a credible community scheme. Other participants have joined together through their love of music to create a community DJ company and hope to become a social enterprise with links to the PF project. Other participants from a local estate have joined with PF to approach the registered social landlord in order to acquire an abandoned piece of land. The young people want to turn the space into a 'City Oasis', for themselves and the community to enjoy.

3.3.5 Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Aside from the provision of subsidised access to a range of activities, in terms of achieving economic well being it is quite clearly a major challenge for projects to demonstrate a significant impact particularly in light of the relatively small proportion of work with older participants across the programme. Nevertheless, a small number of participants from our case study projects have moved into employment as a result of their involvement, including those former participants who now work for projects. The move towards accrediting young peoples achievements and providing volunteering opportunities will help to bring some of these benefits to a wider number of participants by strengthening their personal profiles and CVs. Indeed some projects have also assisted participants with the search for employment more directly by helping them to prepare CVs, letters of application and accompanying them to the local Connexions office. However limited, the link at one of our case studies to the host agency's adult service provides something of a model for older participants, as through it they are able to access a service which helps them to locate training and work.

Key message PF projects are perhaps uniquely placed to achieve the objectives outlined in the ECM Outcomes Framework

3.3 The final score: A new M&E framework for PF

Despite the diverse impacts of the programme, until recently PF was served by a monitoring and evaluation framework which was based upon periodic and largely quantitative surveys. This approach limited projects' capacity to 'tell their story' and, more importantly, failed to empower projects to make use of the 'data' collected at a local level. The surveys did represent the breadth and reach of projects' work – information which helped to secure continued commitment from government and other funding bodies – but they did not reflect the complex and evolutionary nature of both participants' and projects' journeys. Furthermore the surveys were not focused specifically on the relationship between PF and government agendas such as Every Child Matters.

As a result of these shortcomings, and following the lessons drawn from earlier case study research reports, in summer 2005 the PF programme began piloting a new M&E framework developed by Substance.⁹ The framework, which was piloted with nine projects including two from the case study research, was designed with a number of principles in mind. These included a belief that any M&E framework adopted by PF should be more participatory in nature and should seek to achieve fresh and inclusive ways of assessing and learning. There was also a belief that any new framework should reflect both the process of change associated with PF and the views and aspirations of those most directly affected by it. In terms of reporting, it was felt that the new framework should, wherever possible, ensure compatibility with project partners' information needs. To achieve this, Substance placed the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework at the heart of the project reporting mechanism, as well as embracing wider youth work oriented models of assessing participant progress.

The piloting of the framework generated useful debates between Substance and the nine projects, and ultimately contributed to the development of a comprehensive new M&E framework for PF which has been rolled out from summer 2006. The framework is organised according to a number of 'tiers' and an online reporting mechanism.

3.2.5.1 Tier 1: The Log Book

The framework first embraces a project Log Book (a paper-based folder) which has replaced the Key Elements survey as the primary source of quantitative data collection. Used by staff involved in frontline delivery, it provides both a means to

⁹ www.substance.coop

record basic session and attendance data, as well as a method of tracking participant progress and significant incidents.

The Log Book contains three main proformas for the recording of information: the 'Scheme Profile' which documents the activities being delivered; 'Participant Details' which facilitate the recording of young people's key information; and 'Session Registers' which help to monitor attendance. Together, these generate essential baseline evidence for projects.

In addition to the three main proformas, the Log Books contain 'General Comments' sheets on which staff can record more detailed and critical observations of activities and young people's engagement with them. The 'Session Registers' also include a facility to record 'Engagement Level' notes for individual young people (see below).

3.2.5.2 Tier 2: The Engagement Matrix

Based upon learning from youth work progression models and the engagement matrix developed by *darts*, a community arts project in Doncaster,¹⁰ a number of 'levels' of engagement and achievement, characterised by a range of behaviours, have been identified which are designed to help PF projects capture and reflect the 'pathways' which participants may follow.

Table 3: Engagement Levels

Level 1 Disengagement	Level 2 Curiosity	Level 3 Involvement	Level 4 Achievement	Level 5 Autonomy
Sit out and ignore activity	Watch activity	Join in with others	Complete tasks	Initiate ideas
Encourage disputes	Dip in and out	Respond to instruction	Communicate with staff outside of activity	Help plan and run activities
Distract others	Ask questions	Talk about experiences	Make positive statements	Advise and educate peers
Walk out	Listen to staff and peers	Enjoy good relations with others	Celebrate work publicly	Praise work of others
Make negative comments	Comment on activity	Share facilities	Make connections beyond project	Manage conflict between others
Destroy/damage facilities	Talk to others about activity	Handle conflict & confrontation with maturity	Gain accreditation and qualifications	Volunteer
	Try activity on own	Attend regularly		Make 'career' choices
				Gain employment

¹⁰ See Hirst & Robertshaw (2003)

By way of illustration, it is instructive to consider the example of one young person whose engagement was monitored using the engagement tool during the piloting of the new M&E framework. Irving's 'progress' has rarely been linear, but as a broad trend he moved from Level 2 (Curiosity) to Level 4 (Achievement) in recent months, and has even exhibited some elements of behaviour which could be classified as Level 5 (Autonomy). Despite this, if Irving was to be 'monitored' in more conventional ways, it would be almost impossible to discern any progress. He is still on a partial school timetable and is soon to be transferred to a Pupil Referral Unit. This information does not mean, however, that one should dismiss Irving's increasing engagement with PF as evidence of progress. On the contrary, it is from this 'success' *in the context of the project* that further small and incremental changes in Irving's life may follow. Irving's engagement with the PF project will hopefully demonstrate for him a different way of connecting with life – a new way of 'being' – which could open up a range of new possibilities. By any standard, this should be considered a 'success'.

It should be noted that the engagement tool also has a developmental purpose for projects as well as for young people. Rather than just being a means of recording outcomes, the tool is designed to encourage staff to be more proactive in their work with young people, helping them to identify different stages of development and to tailor support accordingly. At one of the projects where the new M&E framework has been piloted staff are already discussing individuals and sessions and their progress more often, and are holding end of month young people's review meetings which all core and sessional staff attend. At a recent meeting, it was agreed that all young people who had disengaged from the project would be contacted to discuss reasons for their non-attendance and how they could be re-engaged. Also, following a session where young people had scored relatively poorly on the engagement matrix, staff told us they intended to consult with the young people about making changes to the session content in the hope that this would encourage the girls and young women who attend to engage more enthusiastically. In line with these experiences, it is envisaged that, in addition to providing a new means by which to monitor and record the development of young people, use of the engagement tool will provide a new mechanism which invites projects to continually reflect on the practice and experience of their work.

3.2.5.3 Tier 3: Qualitative Evidence and Every Child Matters

In order to enable projects to more fully represent their journeys, 'impacts' and 'successes', it was felt that the new M&E framework should embrace imaginative and participative approaches which would generate qualitative case stories and multi-media representations of projects' work in action. As such the third tier of the framework embraces a new 'toolkit' which is focused specifically on enabling projects to evidence achievements against the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework .

The toolkit is designed to provide projects with suggestions for how they can evidence their impacts in interesting, useful ways which do not require a great deal of time and frequently can be built into project activities. Indeed the intention is that this more participatory M&E activity should be viewed as an integral part of PF projects' programmes of work. The toolkit points out that there are various innovative methods which can act both as activity sessions and as forms of M&E evidence. In addition, it is also noted that there are other formats of data collection which projects probably already utilise without recognising them as M&E activities. The suggestions in the toolkit are organised against the sub-categories of the ECM Outcomes Framework, and details are provided for the variety of ways in which projects can generate 'evidence' of such activities. In the final pages of the toolkit, detailed 'How To' guides are provided on the types of M&E 'evidence' (documents, audio-visual material, maps, etc.) which can be generated from everyday project activities, and how these can be stored electronically and used in annual and other reports (see below).

The collection of this tier of information has been designed with various purposes in mind. It will enable projects to capture and report young people's voices and detail their experiences on various schemes of work. It will also facilitate projects' abilities to demonstrate the full range of their activities and the stories of their development. Furthermore, as with the engagement tool, it is envisaged that the third tier data will provide projects with information which enables them to reflect on practice and the individual needs of young people. It will also provide them with a whole range of materials which can be used in communication with partners and potential funders.

3.2.5.4 Reporting – The Substance Project Reporting System (SPRS)

The three tiers of the new M&E framework are supported by the online Substance Project Reporting System (SPRS). This is used by individual PF projects and the Substance team to record, store and analyse baseline, engagement and qualitative evidence linked to the ECM Outcomes Framework.

The 'inputting' functions of the SPRS are organised according to the same principles as the three tiers of the M&E framework. The system allows projects to transfer and process session details, attendance registers and participant information which may have been gathered using the project Log Books. With reference to participant information, projects have been instructed that they are not required to gather all details in the first instance, but rather should see the collection as a process which might reveal something of the emergent relationship between the project staff and the participant. The system also enables projects to record engagement levels for young people as well as to monitor the history of their engagement over time.

In terms of information which is additional to that recorded in the Log Book, the system allows projects to record details of various 'outcomes' and qualifications

which might have been achieved by young people during their time with projects. It also enables them to record details of court orders which might be pertinent in situations where young people have had restrictions placed on their movements or associations. Furthermore, the system has a facility which helps projects to record 1-2-1 sessions with young people (either formal or informal) and any 'action points' which might have developed from such discussions.

The final inputting element of the SPRS is the 'Files' function which enables projects to upload documents, websites and audio-visual files. To categorise this evidence, projects are asked to classify files in various ways so that they are easy to search for and organise for use in reports.

The reporting functions in the SPRS are currently three fold: Statistics; 'Tag Clouds'; and Reports. The Statistics function produces instant, 'live' numbers on young people associated with projects which can be classified by any category or time-scale deemed pertinent or appropriate. These statistics can be exported for use at any point. The Tag Cloud function provides a visual representation of all the 'key words' associated with the 'Files' in the system. The more often a word or phrase has been used, the larger it will appear in the 'cloud'. The Report function is a user-friendly rapid reporting mechanism which enables projects to put together annual and other reports quickly as long as data in the system is fully up-to-date.

All three report functions have been designed with a range of purposes in mind. Most obviously, they enable projects to report back to Substance which is responsible for programme-wide M&E activities for PF. Maybe more importantly, however, they are also intended to be useful at a local, project level in terms of providing projects with valuable information for discussions with funders and partners, but also in terms of encouraging projects to reflect on their practice and delivery, as well as on the development of young people. The tag cloud, for instance, is useful not only in terms of telling the story of a project to an external party, but is also helpful in encouraging project staff to periodically scrutinise what it is their project is actually doing. Equally, the statistics section provides projects with instant information on the gender, geographical, age and ethnic profile of participants on different schemes, thereby encouraging comparative analysis of different types of work.

This approach to making M&E activities useful and even indispensable for projects is almost without precedent. Far too often in the past, projects have viewed M&E as a distraction and a distinctly troublesome activity which was experienced principally via the act of sending information off to people who did not report back anything of any local value. With the new M&E framework in place, and with positive initial feedback from the pilot projects, PF is now in an excellent position to generate the first comprehensive, useful and verifiable programme-wide assessment of the impact of a sport-based social intervention.

Part Four: Conclusion

In the publication *On the Eastside* (Crabbe & Slaughter, 2004), which focused on the estate based social inclusion interventions of Leyton Orient Community Sports Programme (LOCSP), an attempt was made to re-think the ways in which outcomes are assessed by drawing on Andrew Scull's famous essay, *Community Corrections: Panacea, Progress or Pretence* (1983). By adapting and refining Scull's questioning framework, an initial typological assessment of the claims that could be made of the work of LOCSP in particular, and sporting interventions more generally, was developed. Ultimately, the three 'claims' (panacea, pretence and progress) were considered with reference to various factors or potential outcomes, namely:

- Sport
- Community
- Clients
- The State
- Social inclusion
- Evidence

Whilst recognising that none of the characterisations fully reflects the complexity of the project's work with young people, a preference was suggested for the 'progress' perspective in a context of the fruitlessness associated with measuring 'success' and 'failure'. Funding partners and evaluators may seek a 'panacea' for social problems on the basis of assessments which are total, fixed and un-contentious, but ultimately this very process is itself a 'pretence'. It is our assessment then that, given the complexities involved, any honest evaluative framework will necessarily be partial, contingent and subjective. As will be clear from the preceding part of this Report no one example of work or life history fits neatly with any of Scull's three 'claims'. As with the examples from LOCSPs work, each of the stories we have followed here are characterized by clashes, which enable them to be simultaneously advocated and refuted, illustrated and contradicted.

What is different about our findings here though is that whilst the work on LOCSP suggested the organisation had 'produced a range of tactics, approaches and styles that can broadly be characterised as compatible with the progressive model' (Crabbe & Slaughter, 2003:104) we are less convinced that this applies across the sector or even to the PF programme as a whole. As such, we are drawn to the ways in which Hylton and Totten (2001) have invoked Raymond Williams's (1977) work in relation to considerations of community sports practice. According to Williams, at any given moment within a culture, there is a 'dominant' culture, an 'emergent' culture, and one that has past, but still leaves its 'residual' marks on the current forms of culture.

Hylton and Totten used this model to develop a taxonomy of influences within the 'culture' of community sports development which distinguishes between the:

- 'Dominant' - 'Sport for All' model
- 'Residual' - 'Action Sport' model, and
- 'Emergent' - 'Best Value' and 'Active Sports' models.

What they seem to be arguing is that within the field of community sports practice we have moved from an approach characterised by grounded community interventions (Action Sport) to a catch all panacea approach (Sport for All) and now towards a marketised model (Best Value). Leaving aside the difficulties associated with the dubious claim that the Action Sport model was ever 'dominant', for the purposes of better understanding the PF approach and its impact we would suggest an alternative interpretation on the basis of the cultural disciplines which *underpin* various models of community sport practice. For us it is possible to distinguish between a 'Dominant' approach characterised by a sports development perspective and a 'Residual' approach whose legacy derives from the Victorian Rational Recreation and Muscular Christianity movements, leaving the social inclusion and community development approach previously associated with the 'Action Sport' model and now espoused by PF as a new '*Emergent*' force.

Table 4: A new taxonomy of community sport practice

Category	Approach	Characteristics
Dominant	Sports Development	Performance led Highly structured/standardised Fixed term 'Expert' driven National/regional programmes Institutional
Residual	Victorian	Authoritarian moral and social development Commitment to Rational Recreation perspective Disciplinarian approaches and values
Emergent	Social inclusion	Addressing social disadvantage Personal and social development approach Flexible, long term participant focused work Local

Of course the whole point of Williams' work is that rather than these cultural influences being distinct and separate, the dominant, residual and emergent forces are seen to straddle one another, denying each a final sense of hegemonic authority. In this sense, the categories cannot be applied to specific programmes or periods in the way that Hylton and Totten suggest. The sports development model cannot be seen in isolation from the influences of the Victorian sports project just as much as it is now getting pulled in new directions

by the Government’s social inclusion and community regeneration agendas. Similarly, it would be absurd to categorise any individual sports programme as some kind of vestige of Victorian influences, although it may be possible to identify stronger traces within some programmes and sports - such as boxing - than others.

As such whilst we are inclined towards the representation of the social inclusion perspective of PF as an emergent influence within the field of community sports practice, which is increasingly likely to assume a dominant position, this cannot be claimed in any complete and uniform sense. Rather it may be possible *within* the PF programme to identify a further range of broad influences which may help to determine the future direction of the programme and, in turn, community sports practice more generally.

Table 5: Taxonomy of PF project approaches

Category	Approach	Characteristics
Dominant	Crime reduction	Highly targeted Criminal justice agency led Focused on the control and management of disruptive behaviour
Residual	Sport development	Focus on development of mass participation Activity driven Led by conventional sport providers
Emergent	Social inclusion	Focused on personal and social development Flexible, outreach approaches Community based and led

Whilst we have included a ‘crime reduction’ approach here as the ‘dominant’ category, this is based upon the original designation of the PF programme rather than the models of practice that have developed from it. From our observations it is clear that the social inclusion or community development approach, epitomised by two of our case studies - one from the first phase and one from the third phase - is the emergent and increasingly dominant influence. It is these projects that have most clearly and un self-consciously demonstrated their success in retaining young people’s engagement, contributing to their personal development and impacting upon their wider patterns of behaviour. Indeed key personnel from these projects have become instrumental in helping to inform and manage the new strategic directions for the programme over the life term of the research.

What these projects also represent is a form of social enterprise which is seen to be attractive because on the one hand it speaks the language of ‘community’, whilst also representing a social policy intervention which can be managed on market lines. Indeed through their more entrepreneurial approach they are far more effective at doing this than the more conventional sports and social welfare providers who have embraced models of working characterised by concepts of

'best value'. In this sense the more innovative elements of the PF programme do not challenge the ultimate dominance of market forces but are fiercely committed to finding ways to redirect resources to those who have been the principle victims of those forces. Whilst hardly revolutionary and undoubtedly underpinned by wider societal fears of social breakdown, crime and disorder, this does represent a fundamental break with the overt social control agendas of the Victorian sports project and the sports for sports sake approach which was dominant during the late 20th century.

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Appendix 1: Research Activity, Positive Futures Case Study Research Project, 2004-2006

Number of days spent with projects	475
Number of activity sessions attended	396
Approximate number of days spent at project offices	282
Number of 'events' attended with project staff	27
Number of social contacts with staff/young people	20 ¹¹
Number of 'residential' attended	7
Number of research exercises – mapping, questionnaires, etc – conducted with young people	33
Number of interviews with staff (NB: Some staff interviewed more than once)	82
Number of interviews with project partners	53
Number of formal interviews with young people	30 ¹²

¹¹ Not including informal time spent during lunch breaks etc.

¹² Due to the problematic nature of formal interviews with young people we preferred to engage in more informal discussions and activity based research exercises to ascertain young people's views. Informal contact and discussion was maintained with young people at all activity sessions as well as in project offices and social locations

Appendix 2: Summary of Participant Journeys

Project	Participant	'Journey'
1	Jane	Jane ran away from home in 2004 and a Connexions worker quickly referred her onto the PF one-2-one and a female only scheme. Jane really enjoyed the sessions and over time progressed on to become a mentor to the other participants. However despite this success Jane is no longer involved in the project and the staff have now lost touch with her. In this sense on the basis of the project's failure to maintain contact Jane has moved through an engagement pathway characterised by curiosity leading to involvement but ultimately to disengagement.
1	Ronnie	Ronnie was 14 at the start of the research and was engaged in a multi sports group. He gained accreditation in snow boarding, despite saying that he is not the most enthusiastic of sportsmen. He was referred onto the programme by his school as he had been excluded 3 times in one year. In the summer of 2005, Ronnie had a major operation and, because the programme's activities are invariably physical, this meant he was unable to maintain his involvement. He recuperated and is now back with the project. However, he is being 'moved on' from PF shortly, 'not because [he's] done anything wrong, but [because he doesn't] need to be here any more,' reported a member of staff. Ronnie's commitment to maintain engagement throughout disruptive periods including moving house and illness make it even more disappointing that the PF project can no longer maintain his participation and provide an onward pathway. Ronnie is therefore now involuntarily disengaged from the scheme.
1	Rod	Rod was 14 at the start of the research and lives with his extended family. Project workers have noted that 'his family gets a lot of stick because they're noisy and their 'different'. They've had a brick through the window.' He was referred on to the project through his school. He had an ASBO, but this has now expired. The project has since noticed a change in his behaviour commenting that 'he had no eye contact; but he's not so shy now!' Rod was working towards his JSLA with the Youth Service but disengaged with PF in the summer of 2005. His decision to drop out coincided with his brother deciding he did not want to join and staff have not pursued him since. Like some of the others at this project Rod's engagement has then moved through stages of curiosity and involvement but ultimately to disengagement.
1	Sonny	Sonny was referred to PF by the Junior YIP due to his frequent fighting and his sister has also

		<p>been engaged by PF. Sonny is a great teller of tales and interacts easily stating that his ambition is to be either a scrap metal dealer or a policeman. His teachers report that he is a good attender and he talks enthusiastically about a digital photo project he is involved with. Sonny remained with PF through his transition to secondary school. His behaviour remained good and he enjoys the sessions, participating in all activities and suggesting others. He still has literacy problems and, although his confidence has improved, he lacks the social skills to deal comfortably with formal settings, being best suited to small group work. He loves cars, and joined a PF associated motor project, and would like his Estate to be improved. He reports that he's less involved in fights now and retains his love of animals, fishing and camping. Whilst Sonny's engagement has been consistent and developmental and he has managed to improve his violent outbursts he has not yet gained commensurate accreditation.</p>
1	Irving	<p>Irving has low self esteem, communication problems, moderate learning difficulties, and has been diagnosed as suffering from ADHD and 'borderline Aspergers.' He bullied and was excluded from primary school and is now at Secondary school. He was referred by Social Services who feared he was in danger of becoming involved in ASB on his Estate. An internal assessment reports that his behaviour at PF is now greatly improved. He hates football, but loves fishing and outdoor pursuits, which the project can offer him. Although he is now much more sociable at the project, he is about to go to a PRU. He is a regular attender and, when towards the end of the research, Social Services tried to persuade his Mother to involve other agencies in his 'package', she told his social worker that she considered that strong, enjoyable relationships with adult neighbours and involvement with PF to be sufficient for Irving. Irving is keen to remain involved with PF after his transfer to a PRU and he chats enthusiastically about hobbies and part time work.</p>
1	Rachael	<p>Rachael was referred to PF in mid 2004 and has taken part in female only sessions. She was referred by the YOT when she was on a final warning for causing criminal damage at school, where she was frequently on report. She went on to attend Haley's evening group, before its demise where she enjoyed the arts and crafts on offer. Since engaging with PF, she has not been on report and attended school regularly. Her mood swung from bubbly and loving to sullen and distant, but she was well liked by other participants and said that, although she found PF sessions hard going at times, because of the demands to attend regularly and to engage in accredited work, she felt she had 'come on' during her time with the project, in terms of building</p>

		her patience and getting along better with others. She was recently 'dragged off the street' and into a dance session by a worker, but has now disengaged.
1	Mary	Mary is deemed to be a high risk by the project. She was referred by the YOT in mid 2004, after an offence of criminal damage. She had difficulty interacting with adults and peers when she came to the project, but now works well with staff and participants of both sexes. Project workers have traced some of her anger and insularity to the death of a close relative; her Mother had not been able to make the link but now, the two of them have worked through the issues. As well as being part of the multi sports group, Mary also took part in female only football sessions, facilitated by the Youth Service. She has remained with the group throughout the research and staff feel that her behaviour has improved, although she still causes 'problems' in the neighbourhood. She still feels a need to develop coping strategies to address her anger and has spoken of moving out of the area as a means of getting away from stressful influences. Unfortunately, like others, she will also be 'moved on' by the project shortly, although there may be the opportunity for her to take a JSLA via another project.
1	Samuel	Samuel attended the project Youth Club. He has an older brother and lives in the centre of town with his father who maintains a clean and orderly home which is well equipped with IT and gaming equipment. He was referred by Social Services who classify him as Looked After. Because of a fairly isolated, sedentary home life, Social Services were keen for him to have access to a wider circle of friends, and physical activity. Samuel told how, 'I only have one mate, but I have a snake as well.' He is impeccably polite and immaculately turned out in his school uniform. Samuel dropped out of PF after only a few sessions. His Dad wasn't enthusiastic about him attending, and his older brother did not engage with PF when approached to do so.
2	Monica	Monica is 14 and was referred onto the Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP) in the summer of 2005 following a history of involvement in bullying behaviour and lower educational attainment than her ability would suggest. When noting the young persons' strengths the referral agent claimed that Monica <i>'enjoys all aspects of sport'</i> . The referral onto the BIP programme was due to her risk of permanent exclusion from school. Monica has been sent home from school repeatedly due to her <i>'aggression towards staff and her peers'</i> . She currently has an ASBO and is facing charges for ABH however she has had an excellent attendance level on the PF / BIP scheme and PF staff have noted much improvement in her behaviour. Therefore Monica's engagement can be seen as ranging through disruptive and non-participatory to engaged and

		consistent.
2	Davey	Davey is 15 and is the smallest and youngest looking of the group, he is also slightly overweight resulting in regular verbal insults from other participants. Davey attempts to be involved in the sport activities but his constrained ability prevents him from feeling fully included and as a result he often sits on the side-lines and observes. The diversity of the programme means that there are other activities, which Davey is willing and able to undertake. For example he was actively involved in a recent orienteering trip and gave it a go when many of the others decided to sit in the mini-bus or kick a ball around the car park.
2	Joseph	Joseph had been attending the biodiversity and access project (BAP) for around a year alongside the PF staff. Over the year he grew fond of the rangers and the work he was doing with them. His troubled family life meant that he was in and out of care and recently his Mum decided to move away from the area and take him with her. On arriving at his new home, Joseph kept in touch with the rangers and told them how he really wanted to continue with the BAP work. The PF manager contacted the local ranger team and provided Joseph with a good reference. Since then Joseph has been working for the rangers in his new home town and is still in contact with the rangers at the BAP. His reference, accredited training and his positive attitude all factored in his new success. Although no longer engaged with the project his involvement led to a successful outcome.
2	Alfie and Steve	Alfie and Steve are brothers and were aged 13 and 11 respectively when they were engaged with the PF XL evening scheme in 2004. They had been referred through the local YOT and were known to many other welfare agencies due to their parents hard drug addiction. The brothers were described by one worker as 'thick as thieves' and on their last engagement (a residential trip) they showed great solidarity when faced with the prospect of being sent home. The lads were a real handful for the project and were not invited back on the XL scheme after their 12 week placement. Both brothers have a sharp and witty sense of humour and seemed oblivious to the other lads 'skits' at their scruffy and often dirty appearance. Since their non-participation they have been suspected of flooding and vandalising the PF building and are often seen on the local parade skipping school.
2	Robbie	Robbie is 15 years old and has been engaged with PF on the BIP programme since September 2005. He is a talented footballer and all round sportsman. He has a manner of aloofness and he routinely wears his hood up and his baggy long-sleeved top pulled over his arms. While this

		behaviour can at a glance make him appear an intimidating 'hoody' he is in actual fact extremely self-conscious of his skin which is covered in eczema and psoriasis. Robbie started out as a shy, reserved lad but has since developed into a popular, entertaining member of the group. Recently Robbie began to attend sessions wearing short-sleeved t-shirts and he openly chats to staff about his future hopes. Robbie is still engaged with the project.
3	Rose	Aged 15, Rose has been engaged with the PF project since its creation. She frequently hangs out at the PF offices with her friends and is seen as one of the 'core group' of PF 'girls'. Her engagement has been constant but at times fraught as a result of her 'anger management' issues and turbulent home life. Rose is a talented footballer and DJ and is possibly going to undertake a work experience placement with PF. Initially Rose was shy and often disruptive but is now a confident, bubbly and energetic young woman displaying signs of autonomy through the organisation of her own football coaching sessions.
3	Jerry	Jerry was involved with the PF project from the beginning and due to his age quickly moved from participant to volunteer/sessional staff member. His involvement with the project was a great success and the young people looked-up to him due to his shared experiences and background. Unfortunately Jerry is no longer engaged with PF due to a variety of personal issues. His disengagement was largely caused by his inability to obtain a CRB form and his need for consistent and reliable income. The PF team have attempted to maintain contact and the last they heard from Jerry was that he was employed in the construction industry.
3	Katie	Katie is also one of the 'core group' of PF 'girls'. She is now aged 15 and is currently struggling at school as she feels that the teachers do not appreciate her. Katie often binge drinks at the weekend which has previously led her into trouble. Katie is a heavy smoker and with the help of the PF staff has been attempting to quit smoking during the school summer holidays. Her engagement with PF has moved from interested to fully engaged and her attendance is having a positive effect on her social life.
3	Chris	Now aged 16 Chris has been engaged with PF since he was 14. He is a keen footballer and has attended many PF schemes of work including PAYP, 'football-focus' and the social 'lads-evening' group. During his time on the project Chris has been removed from mainstream school and has been the victim of a violent gang related attack. He has however remained constantly engaged with PF and has recently set up his own 'kids soccer school'. His personal life may appear to have suffered some set-backs including his removal from school but his engagement with PF

		has provided a stabilising influence, proving developmental and purposeful and contributing to his strive for autonomy.
3	Danni	Danni is an older lad aged approximately 19, although there are rumours that he is older still having stayed off school for a period. Danni has been engaged with PF for around two years and is a talented footballer who represents a League Two youth team. He helps out with the football coaching of the 'lads' in his peer group, who all look up to and admire him. Danni has poor literacy and PF attempted to encourage him to take adult-learning classes although he was horrified when he learnt that parents of his friends were on the course. However he has excelled and has become a much more confident and optimistic young man. He has recently undertaken some formal coaching for PF and is a good example of a participant moving through participant, volunteer and staff roles.
3	Ben	Ben is a popular lad in the area and is well known to both the young people and other welfare agencies. He began his involvement with PF on the 'football focus' coaching scheme and was then signposted onto other activities including an audio-visual scheme and the PAYP activities. During his involvement he has been involved on the fringes of some illicit-income generating activities, to the full knowledge of the project. The project has maintained their engagement with Ben and have attempted to offer advice and guidance on generating alternative income. Ben's engagement has been far from linear in its development and has fluctuated between periods of curiosity and intermittent disengagement, although overall he has been involved as an active participant.
4	Annie	Annie is 16 years old and had taken part in a number of PF activities over the past two years, including dance, day trips, residentials and trampolining. Staff feel that she does not use substances, but she often speaks of being drunk. She has been identified as one of the 'Top 50' and was referred to PF by the YIP. She attends school on a full timetable and has gained accreditation through PF. After the death of a close relative, a member of staff reports 'being in the group, having friends here, away from home, really helped to pull her through.' As she remains with the project, staff hope to introduce her to activities available to the 17-19 age group and to encourage her to become a mentor. Her Mother said 'she's so much more cheerful since she started going out with you. She's got more energy. I wish there'd been something like that for the other ones, when they were younger.'
4	Emmie	Emmie is 17 and was referred to PF by a worker at her hostel about a year ago. One worker

		remembers their first meeting with her as 'an anti climax, because her reputation preceded her. I'd heard that she was loud, brash, in yer face, hard faced and even scary so when I did finally meet her, I was expecting this big, hard, tough lass but to me, she just seemed cheeky and a bit too lively'. She regarded anti-social behaviour as one way to gain respect from her peers, insisting that she only goes out with 'chavs' as people who aren't involved with crime are 'geeks'. Since becoming involved she has become less attention seeking and more reflective about her behaviour. She began volunteering at sessions and in the PF office and enjoyed being given some responsibility and being with staff'. According to one worker, 'Jade's attitude to work varied from at first being really laid back and turning up when it suited her to being punctual and regularly attending.' Her attitude towards others changed dramatically and young people no longer fear her; they like her being around. She has changed her appearance, making a conscious effort to smarten herself up for work. When she left the area recently, Emmie was not far from being 'work ready', but without further positive influence, staff were not sure that she would continue to follow her newfound path. She returned to the area swiftly, and the project has now re-established contact with her.
4	Wayne	Wayne had just turned 16 when he engaged with PF and was on the 'Top 50' list. Referred previously by YIP, he re-engaged as a self referral. He attended a Behaviour Support Unit, which he refers to as 'the bad school'. His sister also attends PF. He was not a keen sportsman, deciding not to participate in football, but attended the young women's trampolining group. After attending a mixed residential, he began to socialise more with male PF participants. By the standards of many families whose children engage with PF in the area, Wayne is affluent, the concern being that it is illegal activities which allow his parents to take him on holidays abroad and to access a range of leisure activities outside of PF. He recently disengaged with the project and has not been pursued by staff.
4	Serena	Serena is not on the 'Top 50' list, but her siblings have been. She is a shy young woman, who does not socialise with other participants to any great degree and often hangs out with staff when new members join the group, being nervous of them. Gemma says that it was hoped being in the trampolining group (she had previously been the only female in a multi sports group) might help to build her self confidence and interaction skills. However, she remains quiet at sessions and tells that she doesn't have many friends outside of PF. She came to the project in early 2003, having been referred by a worker at a local youth centre where she used to play. She has

		recently engaged with other PF activities.
4	Albi	Albi is on the 'Top 50' list. He was attending PF when the research began, having been referred by school. He was being bullied and was identified as having Special Educational Needs, and suffered from low self esteem. He had a fiery temper which Gemma says has mellowed a little during his time with PF. Not a sports fan, he was initially wound up by other participants for his lack of skill, but he has developed into a competent sportsman and his confidence has increased commensurately. 'Come on; you're on my team. Let's beat 'em!' he said when we were playing badminton. Albi 'dips in and out' of the project, says the Manager but this causes him no real concern as he describes Albi as 'more settled than when he came to us; much less aggressive.' He also causes less concern to staff at another agency and at School. He has a brother who also attends PF.
4	Paul	Paul has siblings who have been engaged by PF. He was 9 when he heard about PF, too young to attend sessions, but self referred as soon as he hit 10. He engaged with PF mainly via football, after the dissolution of the multi sports group. Paul had a seemingly inexhaustible ability to wind up which ever young person was standing next to him. He invented his own rules for games and goaded opponents into fighting with him if they disagreed with his scoring system. Gemma says he loves sport, which is used as a means 'to keep him occupied' but Paul, like Albi, is now only an occasional user of the project, which is linked to the lack of transport to sessions.
4	Norm	Norm was involved with PF since a little after the research began. He, and his siblings, are known to Social Services and staff at his school also registered concerns about him, in terms of him bullying and being bullied, and his general health since he has acknowledged that he has used drugs. There were concerns that he sometimes hangs out with older people and he is considered at risk of committing crime and ASB. As a result of Norm's behaviour, the family house has been targeted by local people. He has Special Educational Needs and a reading age well below his chronological age and attends a project to address his learning needs where he is progressing well, with the eventual aim of integrating him back into school full time. Since joining PF, his behaviour at sessions has shown improvement; 'he knows when to listen to instructions now, when to listen to the other kids; before he was just' and Gemma waves her arms around frantically to demonstrate his dervish like initial behaviour. However, he was prone to outbursts, both verbal and physical at sessions. After an incident at a football session, Norm was given a short ban. Unusually, the project's Manager says that PF is not able to approach Norm to try to

		get him to re-engage, that the project can only approach him if his worker makes a referral.
4	Michaela	Michaela self referred in 2002, as she wanted to stop using heroin. She was put on a methadone programme and, despite the occasional lapse, stabilised. Her key worker looked at a number of issues with her, including drugs education and healthy eating, and helped her to identify a number of personal goals. Her worker was keen to engage her with PF to plug some of the social gaps in her life created by moving away from using drugs. She describes her involvement with PF as 'the best thing' and tells how she has much more self esteem and has enjoyed the opportunity to be creative at dance sessions, helping to select tracks and choreograph. 'I've got this brilliant track and I've just been into town to get the version which I can play at the session' (the original came with a parental advisory sticker). Michaela has gained NOCN accreditation via the dance sessions, has also taken part in music sessions, writing and singing, and PF referred her to the Princess Trust where she enrolled onto a fashion design course. Now 22, she no longer engages with PF, as she feels her life is back on track. She is still an occasional user of another arm of the project and has accessed the odd PF dance session. She has a job and is described by the PF manager as 'so happy.'
5	Eddie	Eddie has been with the football project since he was 10, and is now a 19-year-old university student about to start his second year. He's a sessional worker with the project, but tries not to do too much so he can concentrate on his studies. He feels that if it wasn't for this sessional work he'd have to go out and work in retail instead. He thinks he may have gone further with his football development if he had joined another team but he always comes back to the project team because this is where his mates are and for this reason he has not joined the university football team.
5	Hasan	Hasan came to the UK as an asylum seeker 5 years ago, and is now 19. Although his family can stay here, he is still threatened with removal as 'they don't believe that my mum is my mum'. He's doing his A-levels and keeping himself busy by going to the gym and playing football and is generally pretty upbeat. He's not that fit, and is not amongst the better players which can lead to ribbing from team mates. However, he keeps at it, and is getting better and so when he tackles someone or gets past someone, now there's lots of laughter at the other players' expense instead.
5	Lisa	Lisa started going to the boxing gym a couple of years ago. She is 18 now and has just finished her 'A' levels. A couple of years ago she was really struggling with school, disillusioned, not

		really working and getting in trouble for it. The coaches at the gym have really supported and encouraged her. For example Dave (the head coach) sometimes read pieces of her school work, and always stresses the importance of education. In the last year she has really turned around. She decided to really give school a go and started concentrating and working harder. This has paid off with improved predicted results when before all her teachers were expecting her to fail.
5	Frankie	Frankie started the boxing along with Lisa and another friend. A group of them were encouraged to give it a go by their school, but only these three kept coming. Frankie was really 'unsparty', but now has progressed so much that she helps with coaching the young participants. She has blossomed with confidence through her involvement with the gym, the coaches and boxers and has done several show case performances of boxing skills and techniques, and has even had a degree of media coverage. While she is a hardworking, easy and likeable person this belies her difficult background. Frankie comes from a white working class family on a Bermondsey estate, but has grown up with just her Mum. While she is regarded as clever and there are high expectations of her achievement she is conversely offered little in the way of support. She has very problematic family relationships and is currently thinking about how she can leave home, and what housing options there might be for her. However through all her ups and downs over the past couple of years she feels that those at the gym are always there for her and have always supported her. She cannot imagine ever losing these relationships, wherever she goes and whatever she decides to do next. Indeed having received 'A' level results which are good enough to get her into university she plans to go to the gym more regularly now the pressure is off.
5	Liam	Liam is now 13 and has been attending the project's combined education and sports days for the past couple of years. He really likes coming and his Mum has noticed positive changes in him over this period. He is semi literate but says he gets good support with numeracy and literacy from the educational staff. The most important thing he thinks attending the sessions has given him is increased confidence. As he was out of school when not at the ERD (Educational Referral Days) he was frequently bored, and got involved in activities that are considered anti social and sometimes illegal, such as driving diggers on building sites. When asked how he viewed his future he quickly replied "working for London Concrete Pumping" because "they pay good money". He currently lives with his Mum but if he had a job he would like to eventually get a place of his own.

5	Tara	<p>Tara is 14 and has also been attending ERD sessions for nearly two years. When the research first encountered her she was voluble, and sometimes violent. She also talked about her life in relation to drugs, and mugging, and stressed that her Mum 'didn't care', reinforcing this by saying that she was often not clothed or fed by her Mum, so she had to 'sort these things for herself'. She tells her own story about her contact with the project. "Well how it's happened is that at school I was bunking lessons and all that. And then school told me about it. They asked if I wanted to go. And I thought it'd be a good idea so then I went and I liked it so I stayed." She also explains her own progress "Like in class, like at school I was loud, just always disrupting everyone. But no I don't think that, I don't really disrupt others' learning and my learning as much as I used to. I just get on with my work... Like before I used to think I had like, I wouldn't say easy temper, but some people say certain things like I used to just like shout and cuss and that. But not anymore I don't think I'm that bad...as I used to be." A year on Tara is open, happy, and friendly. She is far less aggressive, and doesn't seem to have the same need to dominate the group and shock with her stories. She is hoping to be back in school full time this September and is really looking forward to returning.</p>
6	Rory	<p>Rory is now 17 and is studying for a qualification in plumbing at a college of further education. He is a very articulate and witty young man who was always popular with his peers and the pattern of his development is striking because of the rapid change in his demeanour. In the first few months on the project he lacked discipline, his attendance at classroom lessons was poor and he had very little respect for authority. He was 'disengaged' in the sense that he would often remove himself from the group when the coach was speaking and while doing so, would talk to no one in particular and make rude comments about the coach and his style. He was sarcastic to his teammates and would curse them for making mistakes. He soon changed though and became a very positive presence within the group. He stopped criticising and started praising the efforts of others. He became more serious in his studies and managed to catch up with the work that he missed. He achieved his level one coaching badge and even delivered some school based coaching. He has since passed the practical elements of the PF course and seems to be on the way towards fulfilling his potential.</p>
6	Ian	<p>Ian is also 17 and still in education. He hopes to continue on the PF course for a second year, although the withdrawal of one of the project partners' contribution to the practical elements leaves his future somewhat uncertain. Ian was always a strong character but his strength grew</p>

		<p>week by week through his involvement with the project. As the team's captain he ultimately assumed the responsibility of leading by example. In the first few weeks being captain did not come naturally to him. When speaking to his peers his voice would waver ever so slightly and his movement tended to become restricted. But he grew into the role and by the end of the research period with the group he was a strong leader. The boys really looked up to him and his praise really had an impact on them. He used encouraging words (sparingly) to draw the best out of them and, belying his age, used criticism constructively. Indeed the scheme leader, Errol, always relied on Ian to help him make his point and demonstrate to the less able in the group how to get the most out of the various drills and games. He has now passed his FA level one coaching badge and is hoping to continue to work in football in some capacity.</p>
6	Doumba	<p>Doumba is now 16 and is still in education. He recently had a trial for Arsenal FC and got to the last 16 out of a group of 300. He is a very pleasant young man with a generally laid back character. Having said that he is capable of losing his temper in competition although only with the coach. As his involvement with the project developed he became more and more concerned about life after the course and adopted a very mature outlook regarding his future. He would often stay behind after sessions and talk with Errol, primarily about football but always touched on the various options available to him after the course had finished. His parents were very keen for him to organise a way for him to build himself a career and he took this very seriously. He accompanied Errol on a few training sessions at other sites and was very successful. Over the course of his one year involvement with the project he went from being a quiet happy-go-lucky lad to a focused and ambitious young man.</p>