



**AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLUBMARK AND TWO
ASSOCIATED POLICIES IN BOXING, SWIMMING AND RUGBY UNION**

By

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Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy of
Loughborough University

June 2017

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Abstract

This study analysed the strategies of selected National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and voluntary sport clubs (VSCs) in the process of policy implementation of Sport England's generic *Clubmark* (a quality mark accreditation framework). Within the overarching *Clubmark* framework, other policies (safeguarding and increasing membership and/or participation) adopted by VSCs working towards the accreditation (or re-accreditation) standard were also examined.

Policy-makers are predominantly centrally located, often a distance from the point of delivery where, it is argued; the environment is highly variable, pressured and political, often requiring negotiation and interpretation during the process of implementation. Traditionally, implementation analysis assumed two distinct approaches: top-down theorists (e.g. Hogwood & Gunn, 1984) suppose a perfect rational, systematic process as the starting point, with the focus placed on central policy-makers. The top-down theorists acknowledge that the ideal is unattainable but use the perspective to establish generalisable descriptive policy advice; in contrast, bottom-up theorists (e.g. Lipsky, 1980) argued that to gain a more realistic understanding of implementation the role of street-level bureaucrats (e.g. VSC members at the point of delivery) should be the focus for analysis and seek to offer prescriptive advice. More recently, a number of theorists have developed hybrid implementation models, which offered a synthesis of the two contrasting approaches, such as Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict model. The combination of these three approaches coupled with Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams framework, used to help organise and set a context for the understanding of implementation during analysis, established the theoretical framework that guided this study.

The research adopted a qualitative approach using case studies for the three sports of boxing, swimming and rugby union. Data collection consisted of 29 semi-structured interviews from VSC members, NGB officials, a senior Sport England official and a County Sports Partnership officer. The interview data were combined with document analysis (from VSCs, NGBs and Sport England), which included policy documents, guidance templates, electronic communications and various website content. Two clubs from each sport were examined (one urban, one rural). VSC member selection was based on positions of authority within the committee who had some prior knowledge of *Clubmark*. Three to four NGB officials from each sport provided data for the top-down perspective of policy implementation.

Analysis of the data revealed that policy implementation is not straightforward; NGBs had to be flexible with their strategies and be willing to modify criteria to deal with the varying nature

and capacities of VSCs. Available NGB capacity to offer VSC support proved to be pivotal for implementation success in addition to the ability of the NGBs recognising the range of contextual constraints, which limited VSCs in the implementation process. At the club-level, motivation and willingness of VSC compliance for the three main policy strands varied across sports and clubs, which demonstrated how the role of the VSC members, as implementing agents, was fundamental in the policy process. At the NGB-level, the urgency or importance placed on the three policies and the variable capacity (to offer support) affected implementation.

Application of the theoretical framework that guided the research proved effective in developing the understanding of implementation in this particular sport context. Furthermore, this research has provided a contribution to the literature by demonstrating how the complex and heterogeneous nature of VSCs affects the implementation process in community sport, which provides a useful point of reference for future comparative studies analysing NGBs and VSCs in different contexts.

Key words:

Sport England, NGBs, VSCs, policy, implementation, *Clubmark*, safeguarding, participation, community, sport

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Prof. Trevor Slack. You were the reason why I decided to have a career change and embark on a life of academia! I enjoyed updating you with my PhD progress every time we met up, and during our phone calls every Sunday evening. You always offered me clear, yet effective advice and I am grateful for all of the suggestions and guidance you kindly offered along the way. Writing every day certainly proved to be effective and you'll be pleased to know that I have still not eaten any yellow snow! Cheers, Trevor! RIP.

Acknowledgements

There are a number of people I would like to acknowledge who have helped me in one way or another throughout the PhD process. First and foremost I want to thank my supervisor, Professor Barrie Houlihan, for all of the support provided. Actually, I should start with an apology. I clearly recall the first supervisory meeting where you said, "it's nice to meet you, Alex. However, I don't want to see you again in this office after three years from today!". I may have taken a little longer than three years but I have to say that I was very relieved when the new NCSEM building was completed and your office was relocated, which meant (by default) I managed to stick to your request! When I say support, you always offered me invaluable feedback, calm and measured guidance (even when it was the odd push up the backside!), and the countless meetings that consisted of laughs and jokes – this made the PhD journey an enjoyable experience. Thank you.

I'd like to thank all of my Loughborough PhD peers for the friendship and collegiality, particularly the ZZ007 office mates – mainly for the chats and abuse that helped to keep us all sane!

I appreciate how the interviewees, who were willing to take part in this study, gave up their time for me; I would not have been able to complete this research without the valuable, rich data that they all provided.

Thank you to the two examiners for their discussion and debate during the viva. The fruitful feedback during and post viva enabled me to hone the thesis into a document I am proud of.

Thanks to my parents, Janet (my favourite mother-in-law that I've ever had!) and Trevor for all of their support, encouragement and interest in the topic and of my progress, from the PhD application process through to this present time.

Finally, I'd like to thank my wife, Meghan. Without your support and advice (and organisational skills, and highlighters!) completing this PhD would not have been possible; **we still make a great team.**

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Abbreviations

ACF	Advocacy Coalition Framework
ASC	Advisory Sports Council
AIBA	Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur
AO	Aquatic Officer
APS	Active People Survey
ASA	Amateur Swimming Association
ABA (ABAE)	Amateur Boxing Association (of England)
AHC	Annual Health Check
BDO	Boxing Development Officer
BOA	British Olympic Association
BPA	British Paralympic Association
CA	Club Accreditation
CB	Constituent Body
CDG	Club Development Group
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
CPSU	Child Protection in Sport Unit
CDO	Club Development Officer
CSC	County Swimming Coordinator
CSO	Club Support Officer
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau
CRC	Community Rugby Coaches
CSP	County Sports Partnership
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DfE	Department of Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DH	Department of Health
DNH	Department of National Heritage
DoE	Department of Environment
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EB	England Boxing
EGM	Extraordinary General Meeting
FSP	Free Swimming Programme
GB	Great Britain
GMS	Game Management System
ISA	Independent Safeguarding Authority
ISLP	Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IRB	International Rugby Board
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LA	Local Authority
LOCOG	London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games
MS	Multiple Streams
NGB	National Governing Body

NP	National Panel
NSP	National Safeguarding Panel for Sport
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PAT 10	Policy Action Team 10
PE	Physical Education
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
RCDO	Regional Club Development Officer
RCC	Regional Club Coordinator
RDD	Rugby Development Director
RDO	Regional Development Officer
RDO	Rugby Development Officer
RO	Regional Officer
RFU	Rugby Football Union
RRDM	Regional Rugby Development Manager
TCB	Town Club Boxing
TRC	Town Rugby Club
TSC	Town Swimming Club
SE	Sport England
SSC	School Sport Co-ordinators
SoA	Seal of Approval
SSP	School Sport Partnership
STBC	Small Town Boxing Club
STRC	Small Town Rugby Club
STSC	Small Town Swimming Club
UK	United Kingdom
UKCC	United Kingdom Coaching Certificate
UKSI	UK Sports Institute
VSC	Voluntary Sport Club
WSP	Whole Sport Plan

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the aim and objectives of this research and provides a rationale as to why the research is important. There is a brief overview of the relevant policy literature and an outline of the thesis chapters.

Prior to the 1930s, the UK government exhibited little interest in sport. Since the 1960s sport has become a more regular concern of governments although the intensity and focus of interest has varied considerably. Since the establishment of the GB Sports Council in the early 1970s the three most prominent policy concerns have been to: increase elite success; increase sport participation; and, improve physical activity levels and health. During the past 15-20 years sport policy has consolidated itself as a responsibility of the government and while it is by no means near the top of the agenda it is certainly a regular item. Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) noted that under New Labour (from the late 1990s onwards) the government became progressively instrumental in setting and auditing sport policy objectives. Furthermore, Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) suggested that the relationship between government and the not-for-profit voluntary sport sector has moved through a number of phases, which directly affected the relationship between the government and national governing bodies of sport (and, as a consequence, voluntary sport clubs). The main characteristic of the changing relationship was that funding became allocated according to a neo-liberal, conditional business model where outcomes were more critically evaluated, rather than the preceding model, which was characterised by a culture of entitlement evident within many national governing bodies (NGBs). With this change in the relationship came a number of tensions that have had to be managed by the sport clubs and NGBs.

In recent years NGBs and voluntary sport clubs (VSCs) have replaced local authorities as the government's primary partner to deliver community sport objectives. For example, in 2008, the English Sports Council (Sport England) identified NGBs as new primary partners for the delivery of strategies and initiatives designed to increase participation. The expectation now was that NGBs (and VSCs) would play a leading role in helping to deliver sport policy objectives (Houlihan & White, 2002). While the government sets the policy direction and provides significant resources to deliver sport policy objectives, the vast majority of resources (the people, the facilities, and the organisational capacity, for example) are located

in the not-for-profit sector. Consequently, this creates challenges for policy implementation; getting an estimated 100,000 clubs in existence across England¹ to cooperate in achieving government objectives is a difficult task.

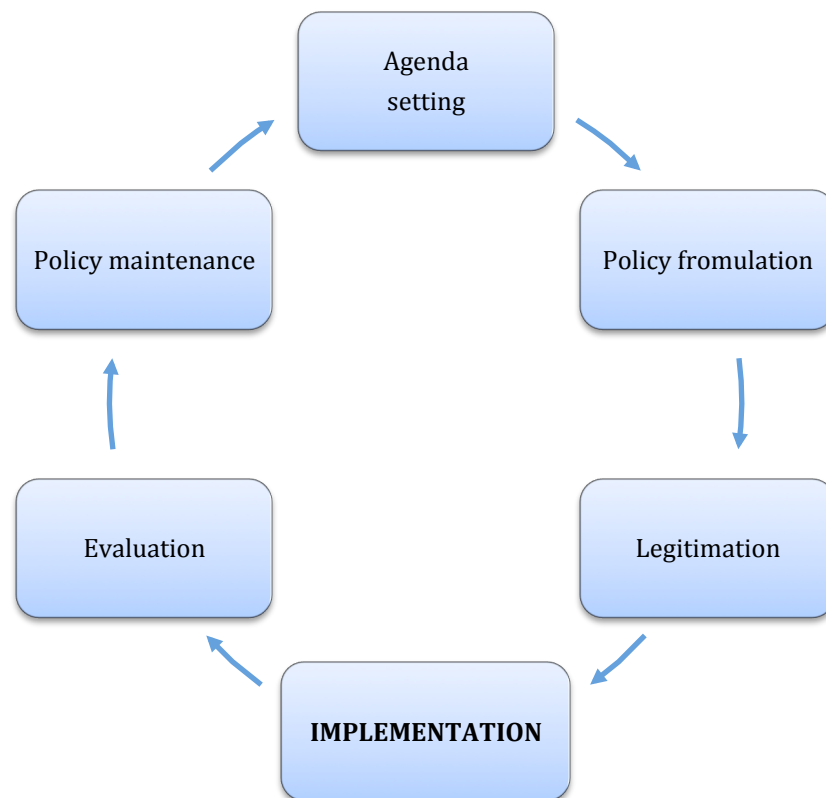
Although there has been a lot of attention focused on the elite development system in the UK (e.g. Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan & Green, 2008, 2011), far less research, in comparison, has been undertaken in relation to the delivery of community sport. School sport research has received attention, such as examining the changing political salience of school sport (e.g. Houlihan & Green, 2006; Houlihan, 2000), and although community sport certainly has not been totally neglected in the literature, it has not experienced the same intensity of research. What is clear is that a focus on the individual sport(s) and club level is lacking. The gap that this research is filling is that it is contributing to the enrichment of research on community sport and, more specifically, the role of clubs and NGBs in acting as the government's implementation agents.

Furthermore, policy makers are predominantly centrally located, often at a significant distance, both geographically and organisationally, from the point of delivery, where it is argued, the environment is political and open to negotiation and interpretation, which can affect the implementation process (Cairney, 2012). Unfortunately, the majority of public policy studies have tended to focus on the agenda-setting and formulation stages of the policy process (see Figure 1.1), which has resulted in a comparative shortfall of studies for the implementation stage (Fischer & Miller, 2006). Implementation can be simply defined as what actually occurs between policy expectations and the (perceived) policy results (Fernman, 1990). Barrett (2004) argues that implementation of a policy should be viewed as a significant stage in the policy process, not an administrative add-on.

Therefore, once a policy is written, such as Sport England's *Clubmark* quality assurance framework, what is the process of implementation? NGBs can apply, if they wish, to obtain the license to award *Clubmark*. Subsequently, each NGB has the option of modifying the framework by tailoring it (within certain limits) to become more relevant to its specific sport. Accordingly, what is the role of NGBs in directing and implementing *Clubmark* or other associated policies, such as safeguarding or increasing participation/club membership? Once a policy is written (or tailored) by the NGB, what is the role of VSCs in the implementation process? Are there other actors involved in the implementation process? This present study attempts to develop our understanding in the way that NGBs and VSCs respond to policy

¹ <http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/policy/research-publications/sports-club-survey-2013> (Accessed 01.10.16)

initiatives from the government and Sport England. Hence, this research was a study of (sport policy) implementation that examined the role of NGBs and clubs in the process of implementation, using three cases (boxing, swimming and rugby union) as the examples. The implementation of the broad multi-element *Clubmark* policy was analysed. Then, within the overarching *Clubmark* framework, two other associated policies were examined: one in relation to safeguarding and one in relation to participation. With this focus in mind, the following research aim and objectives were identified.



Source: adapted from Cairney (2012, p. 34)

Figure 1.1 The generic public policy cycle

1.2 Aim and main research question

The aim of this research was to identify and analyse the role of NGBs and VSCs, in three sports, in the process of policy implementation. Specifically:

What are the strategies the selected NGBs adopt for the implementation of Sport England's *Clubmark* framework (and associated policies), and how do VSCs interpret and implement these policies?

1.3 Objectives

To achieve the aim of this research, the following objectives were determined:

1. Review the public policy literature, with an emphasis on the implementation stage, to identify suitable analytical framework(s).
2. Identify and analyse the role(s) of the selected VSCs in the process of policy implementation in relation to three specific policies; and
3. Identify and analyse the role of the three selected NGBs in the process of policy implementation in relation to three specific policies.

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of a policy context chapter, a chapter discussion of the theoretical framework used to guide the research, a chapter explaining the methodological approaches adopted, four chapters that present the empirical data followed by a concluding chapter. A brief introduction for each of the chapters is as follows:

Chapter 2: *National Governing Bodies of Sport and English Sport Policy* traces the focus of the government's sport policy initiatives between the turn of the twentieth century to the end of 2015 in order to highlight the steady increase in the importance of sport and the changing role of VSCs. Factors that have influenced these changes are discussed and reveal the complex history of community sport.

Chapter 3: *Theoretical Framework* introduces the concept of public policy implementation, which is the central concept for analysis. The chapter sets out to determine a suitable theoretical framework to enable examination of public policies in the case studies of the three selected sports. The two contrasting theoretical approaches to implementation are introduced followed by a synthesis of the two distinct analysis approaches. A number of meso-level theories are proposed that could potentially direct analysis and, finally, a discussion recommending the most appropriate theoretical framework to guide the empirical research is presented.

Chapter 4: *Methodology* provides a discussion of the various philosophical paradigms within social sciences. The research design and the methods used for data collection are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of issues of reliability and validity relevant to the selected research design.

Chapter 5: *Sport England* offers an introduction to Sport England (previously known as the English Sports Council), NGBs, the *Clubmark* accreditation process (including policies within the framework), a discussion on the effectiveness of the *Clubmark* framework, and a discussion of quality assurance schemes given the fact that the implementation of *Clubmark* (and the two associated policies) raises issues for Sport England and NGBs about how they ensure the quality of implementation.

Chapter 6: *Case Study One: Boxing* introduces the NGB, presents the key findings from boxing's NGB, England Boxing (EB)², and data from two boxing clubs.

Chapter 7: *Case Study Two: Swimming* presents the key findings from an examination of the strategies swimming's NGB, the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA), adopted to implement national policies and the role of two swimming clubs in the process of implementation.

Chapter 8: *Case Study Three: Rugby Football Union* presents the key findings from the Rugby Football Union (RFU) case study, which is centered on three policies: Sport England's *Clubmark* framework; safeguarding policy and increasing membership; and participation initiatives.

Chapter 9: Conclusion begins with a summary of the key findings of the empirical research, drawing attention to the similarities and differences across the three sports. The chapter then provides a detailed evaluation of the theoretical framework adopted for this study. Finally, a reflection on the research process and implications for potential future research is addressed.

² Formerly known as the Amateur Boxing Association of England

Chapter 2 National Governing Bodies of Sport and English Sport Policy

2.1 Introduction

The primary roles of sport clubs and NGBs have traditionally been concerned with identifying talent, supporting performance development and delivering competitive success (Bergsgard, Houlihan, Mangset, Nodland, & Rommetvedt, 2007). Since the mid-1990s sport clubs – often referred to as voluntary sport clubs/organisations (VSCs/VSOs)³ – have acquired additional functions and are considered an important part of our society because they have been perceived by successive governments as organisations which have the potential to contribute towards reducing crime, vandalism, drug abuse, and anti-social behaviour and increasing fitness levels and social cohesion (Coalter, 2009; Putnam, 2000). For the reason that voluntary sport clubs are considered to have the potential to provide such welfare and health benefits to society, governments regularly offer grants to NGBs and VSCs, and developed policies in which VSCs are integral to implementation. In 2008, Sport England identified NGBs as primary partners to deliver initiatives designed to increase participation. This resulted in the expectation that VSCs would now play a leading role in helping to deliver sport policy objectives (Houlihan & White, 2002). This recent change in the role of VSCs contrasts with the long period of relative marginalisation encountered while local authorities (LAs) were the primary partner of the Sports Council and later Sport England for delivering sport initiatives.

This new responsibility for VSCs brought changes in funding conditions in the form of contract relationships (Houlihan & White, 2002). Furthermore, implementing and adapting to new policies or legislation and the expectation that they would provide positive contributions to the community creates significant pressures on volunteers to deliver central government's targets (Nichols et al., 2005). This is particularly the case where sport clubs are driven to 'professionalise' in terms of emulating the management practices of other sectors, especially the commercial sector (Taylor, Barrett, & Nichols, 2010). Consequently, for government policies to be implemented effectively, it is crucial to establish a greater understanding of how new policies are implemented by NGBs and how the process affects sport clubs.

³ Also referred to as community sport clubs and voluntary sport organisations. In this thesis the term voluntary sport clubs (VSCs) will be used.

In preparation for a review of the sport policy implementation literature, this chapter provides an overview of key factors that have shaped the development of sport policy in the England with particular reference to the impact on VSCs and NGBs. This chapter sets out to trace the focus of the government's sport policy initiatives between the turn of the twentieth century and the end of 2015 to highlight the steady increase in the importance of sport and the changing role of VSCs. Examination of factors that have influenced these changes are discussed and reveal the complex history of community sport.

The overview is split into five time periods that relate to changes of government which resulted in significant shifts in policy direction (King, 2009). The five periods are: pre-1980; the governments of Margaret Thatcher; the governments of John Major; the governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown; and the coalition government. The pre-1990 period serves as an introduction to the subsequent three periods that are the main focus of this chapter. The rationale for the selection of these time periods post-1980 is due to the identification of watersheds in government policy priorities, which arguably transformed the direction of sport policy in the United Kingdom (UK). For example, in the mid-1990s two major policy decisions were made which had a lasting impact on the direction and momentum of sport policy; namely the introduction of the National Lottery in 1994 and the Conservative Government publication *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995) in 1995, which was the first government sport policy statement for 20 years (Green & Houlihan, 2005). It is important to note that within the policy literature there is some ambiguity between identification and selection of sport policy periodisation; historical watersheds can be categorised in relation to political, economic or sporting impacts. Yet, there is no consensus in the literature for determining the most suitable approach (Cf. Houlihan & White, 2002; Hoye, Nicholson, & Houlihan, 2010).

2.2 The Governments between 1900-1979

2.2.1 Developments in sport policy

During the first three decades of the twentieth century the UK government entertained little interest in sport. The government's involvement in developing sport during those years was described as unsystematic and ad hoc (Coghlan & Webb, 1990; Green & Houlihan, 2005). The year 1935 saw the establishment of a private organisation named the Central Council of Recreative Physical Training (CCRPT). The role of this umbrella organisation was to co-ordinate the work of voluntary bodies involved in providing physical education and

recreation for school leavers in the UK. In 1944 this organisation was rebranded the Central Council of Physical Recreation (CCPR). During the period from 1946 – 1972 the CCPR established seven National Recreation Centres (National Sport Centres) to provide elite facilities for competition, training and coaching by the national bodies of sport (Coghlan & Webb, 1990).

In 1957 the CCPR appointed a committee chaired by Sir John Wolfenden:

To examine the factors affecting the development of games, sports and outdoor activities in the United Kingdom and to make recommendations to the CCPR as to any practical measures which should be taken by statutory or voluntary bodies in order that these activities may play their full part in promoting the general welfare of the community (CCPR, 1960, p. 1).

The report (The Wolfenden Report, 1960) was published in 1960 containing 57 recommendations relating to issues such as administration, finance, organisation, facilities, young people and the relationship between the countries that make up the UK. Many of the findings were consistent with the *Albermarle Report, The Youth Service in England and Wales* (Albermarle, 1960), which was published in the same year. The Albermarle Report suggested that the lack of sport and leisure provision was a primary reason for juvenile delinquency. The three primary recommendations made by the Wolfenden Report were that:

1. There should be a National Sports Development Council with public finance to assist the development of governing bodies of sport and to provide facilities;
2. There should be statutory involvement in financing of sport; and
3. A crusade for more facilities should be undertaken. (Coghlan & Webb, 1990).

Although it is clear that the Wolfenden Committee clearly focused on the *community*, there is little mention of VSCs, which were integral to the delivery of community sport. There was a brief mention of clubs in recommendation number 36 yet is directed toward local education authorities:

Local education authorities should reconsider their charges for hire of their facilities with a view to keeping them within the reach of groups or clubs wanting to use them (CCPR, 1960, p. 110)

Furthermore, despite the fact that the Wolfenden Report affirms that the focus of the committee was across the whole age range, unlike the Albermarle report that exclusively focused on 14 – 20 years olds (CCPR, 1960, p. 25), much of the Wolfenden Report places emphasis on the development of participation opportunities for school leavers and the problem relating to lack of sport facilities. This is what the Committee termed ‘the gap’ where

they referred to the shortfall of provision made for post-school sport and the weak links between school sport and adult clubs (CCPR, 1960, p. 25). The Committee was preoccupied with facility development and not the role VSCs could play in the provision of sport.

Subsequent to the publication of this major report the Labour government began to accept sport as a genuine area of public policy. In fact, Houlihan and White (2002, p. 18) commented that the report “was of profound significance, not only raising the profile of sport with government but also, and more importantly, in shaping the context within which public involvement in sport was to be considered for the next generation.”

One of the first developments in English sport policy, as recommended by the Wolfenden committee, was the inception of the Advisory Sports Council (as an arms-length government organisation) in 1965 (Houlihan & White, 2002). Arms-length bodies (often referred to as quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations or quangos) are key agents for the government at all levels across the UK. This type of body was established with the “aim of making service delivery more effective, taking decisions independently of party political considerations or helping to ensure that relevant professional expertise is brought to bear on public policy making” (LGiU, 2012, p. 3).

The inauguration of the Advisory Sports Council (ASC) in 1965 was a limited step forward by the government. The Sports Council’s role was to attempt to increase public provision through the activities of LAs. However, the budget available to the ASC was modest and the largest funding commitment was in fact directed to meet elite sport objectives (Coalter, Long, & Duffield, 1988) and not those of community sport. This is an early example where advocacy for elite sport was given priority over community sport and the VSCs.

During the early 1970s, governmental policy priorities for sport focused on promoting the *Sport for All* programme. The Sports Council launched this strategy in 1972 with the aim, as the name suggests, of encouraging all members of the community to participate in sport. This led to the Sports Council concentrating on building new public sport and leisure facilities and attempting to increase mass participation (Green, 2006). The grant aid from the Sports Council led to local authorities (LAs) playing an increasing role in sport policy (King, 2009) and becoming important providers of physical activity and participation opportunities through the establishment of many new swimming pools and leisure centres (Bloyce & Smith, 2009). In fact, during 1972 - 1978 swimming pools had increased by around 70 per cent and

sport centres multiplied tenfold meaning LAs were fundamental to sport policy, development and delivery (King, 2009).

However, Houlihan and White (2002, p. 24) noted that, “the *Sport for All* campaign concealed the underlying tension between the community sport view and talent identification and elite development view”. According to Coghlan and Webb, the Sports Council’s Sports Development and Coaching sub-committee made it clear that “it was concerned with the general development of sport and participation across the board” (1990, p. 35). The Sports Council emphasised that elite development was as much a part of *Sport For All* as the provision of community opportunities with the Council equally viewing clubs and NGBs as key partners and not solely LAs or schools (Houlihan and White, 2002).

In 1972, the Advisory Sports Council was given executive powers and rebranded the Great Britain (GB) Sports Council by the Conservative government indicating its intention to improve the status of the Council and widen its responsibilities (Phillips, 2011). Following the election in 1974 Dennis Howell was then appointed the ‘Minister of State for Sport and Recreation’ which further raised the profile of sport within the government (King, 2009). Although this appointment gave sport ministerial status, sport policy remained a relatively low government priority. The government was fully aware that an elaborate infrastructure for sport was already established in the form of NGBs and VSCs in England so were hesitant to compete with, or disrupt, the system already in place.

2.2.2 The priority given to community sport

Notwithstanding sport-related policy developments in the 1960s-1970s from as early as the mid-1960s elite sport was the preferred policy priority rather than community sport. Despite the rhetoric of increasing mass participation (*Sport for All*), critics perceived the funding NGBs received as elitist (Green, 2004). In fact, by the late 1970s it became evident that the mass participation policy was suffering implementation difficulties; achieving the *Sport for All* policy goal of increasing sport and leisure opportunities for all was proving a significant challenge. Part of the explanation might be the weakening and small number of interest groups advocating for *Sport for All* leading Coalter, Long and Duffield (1988) to comment that *Sport for All* became little more than a slogan. As a response to this policy issue, programmes and initiatives were refocused targeting ‘disadvantaged groups’ such as young people, the elderly, ethnic minorities, women, disabled people and lower socio-economic groups (Green, 2006). Houlihan (1991, p. 99) summarised that during this time the *Sport for All* policy had

turned into “sport for the disadvantaged” and, in particular, inner-city youth (King, 2009). Consequently, with the Sports Council’s efforts now focussed on these target groups, support for community sport and its clubs were pushed to the margins.

2.2.3 The role of NGBs and sport clubs

The White Paper, *Sport and Recreation* was published in 1975 by the Labour government in an attempt to provide a structured approach to the UK’s sport policy development and implementation. The publication highlighted the importance of universal access stating that recreational facilities were ‘part of the general fabric of the social services’ (Coalter, 2007, p. 10). Central to this strategy was the introduction of Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation to decentralise power to local and regional levels while maintaining government and voluntary sector links.

However, in practice, the White Paper was not sufficiently specific in terms of required action and public expenditure cutbacks resulted in recommendations not being delivered (King, 2009). Although there were many references made to elite sport and national centres of excellence in the White Paper, once again there was barely a mention of VSCs. Further, Green and Houlihan (2005) noted that over time funding was increasingly directed toward wider social objectives and deprived inner cities (other target groups). At this time, social cohesion was the policy priority with government using LAs as the primary partner to deliver objectives.

2.2.4 Conclusion

The establishment of the CCPR (now rebranded the Sport and Recreation Alliance) and the subsequent publication of the Wolfenden Report by the CCPR changed the shape of sport policy in the UK. During this period it is clear that there was an emerging tension between those who focused on developing elite sport and those who were advocates for mass participation. Compounding this tension was that the general policy preference was for elite sport. Another important point to note is that the relative neglect of VSCs (or, rather, a reluctance to interfere in private organisations) and the preference for LAs as key delivery agents.

2.3 The Thatcher government 1979-1990

2.3.1 Developments in sport policy

In May 1979 Margaret Thatcher became the Prime Minister. Houlihan and White (2002) argued that, in general, the Thatcher-led governments displayed little interest in sport. Few ministers or politicians were concerned with the sport policy area resulting in sport-related issues slipping down the government's agenda. The relevant Secretary of State at the time was Nicholas Ridley. He too, like Thatcher, notoriously lacked interest in sport (Pickup, 1996).

In spite of the Thatcher administration's lack of interest in sport, by the mid-1980s sport public policy forced its way back onto the government agenda. Houlihan (1997) comments that generally, government intervention with sport and leisure concerns was reactive rather than strategic. For example, football related issues such as hooliganism and crowd management had become a major political concern; in 1985 Liverpool fans rioted in Belgium resulting in 39 deaths and in 1989 ninety-five⁴ supporters were crushed at the Hillsborough disaster (Coghlan & Webb, 1990). Bloyce (2009) noted that the hooligan issues that the government were forced to deal with were seen as a burden by the government and reinforced Thatcher's lack of enthusiasm toward sport and leisure and any expansion in the role of the government.

Houlihan and Lindsey (2012, p. 2) describe British sport in the late 1980s as a "largely neglected backwater of public policy". However, a number of significant policies were introduced in this period but in a similar way to the hooligan issues, were often in response to crisis rather than as the product of a strategic approach to sport. For example, the government established the 'Action Sport' programme in 1982. The programme was seen as a possible solution to the issues of social unrest such as the England urban riots in some English cities during the previous year. The programme provided LAs with £1m per year for inner city sports development projects through to 1985 (Bloyce & Smith, 2009). Roche (1993) characterised the endeavors of various bodies promoting sport's interests during the late 1980s and early 1990s as being fragmented and disharmonious. Green (2004) endorsed Roche's conclusion and also noted a lack of leadership between the various sports bodies responsible for delivering youth sport.

⁴ The total deaths have subsequently risen to ninety-six.

At the broader political level the government's policies of privatisation and marketisation affected sport provision by LAs. The commitment to marketisation reflected not just an ideological preference for market solution but also a concern that many LAs were financially inefficient (Bloyce & Smith, 2009). One consequence was that the government introduced compulsory competitive tendering for the day-to-day management of Council's leisure facilities due to the perception that the policy would reduce costs and promote efficiency (Pickup, 1996). However, more importantly the modernisation of LA sport services marked the start of the process of embedding a contract culture in government relations with its service delivery agents – whether they were LAs or, subsequently, NGBs and VSCs.

2.3.2 The priority given to community sport

During the early 1980s there was a clear change in policy direction from facility provision to concentrating resources on particular community target groups (Houlihan & White, 2002), where LAs were still the Sports Councils' primary policy delivery partners. The year 1982 saw the Sports Council publish a strategy document *Sport in the Community: The Next 10 Years* (Sports Council, 1982). Although there was a continued and growing emphasis on schemes for the socially and recreationally deprived, as well as attempting to tackle unemployment, the principal strategy *Sport for All* was placed on the back burner during the 1980s and early 1990s. By the mid-1980s the *Action Sport* scheme was broadened in an attempt to increase participation. *What's your Sport?* was the strapline for the Sports Council's subsequent campaign, which was partnered with a private company and, once again, LAs.

Although in the course of the 1980s the Sports Council published the two strategic documents, these were largely ignored by government, which meant policy drifted. There was a continued focus on participation up to 1989 where there was a definite "shift of priorities in favour of performance and excellence" (Pickup, 1996, p. 21). Due to the Sports Council's ongoing commitment to focus primarily on elite sport (Green & Houlihan, 2005) community sport and VSCs received little attention.

2.3.3 The role of NGBs and sport clubs

The role of sport clubs throughout this period was vague and any direction from government remained peripheral to the Sports Council's campaigns. LAs were still considered the key delivery agents for the strategy *The Next 10 years* although local sports clubs did receive a passing mention:

Most sport is played locally, and so the development of mass participation depends critically on local initiatives. This will require local authorities and education authorities, local sports clubs other local voluntary groups and local commercial interests to work both separately and in partnership (Sports Council, 1982, p. 35)

While VSCs received a mention in the policy document, the fact that the majority of the Sports Council's funding remained with elite sport development was another disappointing time for VSCs apart from those that were part of the elite development process in their sport. Yet, it was no surprise that a Conservative government would not want to interfere with 'private' organisations.

During the late 1980s the Sports Council promoted social welfare and enjoyment of leisure, specifically with a focus on target groups such as the young, women, ethnic minorities and the disabled, which was part of the wider agenda of attempting to increase participation. Development of local strategies for the Sports Council was the task of LAs. Nevertheless, LAs did not receive the entire grant funding as NGBs also received grants to help promote the Sports Council's aim of encouraging top-level sport (Pickup, 1996).

2.3.4 Conclusion

This period can be characterised by "a significant growth in the contribution of local authorities to the organization and administration of sport" (Bloyce & Smith, 2009, p. 44), notwithstanding the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for LA services. Government involvement in sport policy was generally only as a response to social unrest or a by-product of broader ideological commitments (e.g. privatisation). Community sport, particularly VSCs, received very little direct attention from any of the new initiatives and campaigns relating to sport policy although VSCs had the opportunity to work with LAs if they wished.

2.4 The Major government 1990 – 1997

2.4.1 Developments in sport policy

John Major became the UK's Prime Minister in 1990 following the 11-year tenure of Margaret Thatcher. In the early 1990s sport was still not a significant area of focus within the government. However, unlike his predecessor, Major was passionate about sport and his election marked a turning point in UK sport policy following with sport became more prominent on the public policy agenda. In fact, by the late 1990s sport was seen by a number of leading politicians as an important source of social capital and national pride (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012).

Two important policy related changes occurred in the early 1990s. First, 1992 saw the Department of National Heritage (DNH) established which enabled the funding allocations for sport to be controlled centrally (Green, 2004). The DNH took over the sport-related responsibilities of the Department of Environment (DoE), which had been responsible for the sector since 1974. As a result of John Major's personal interest in school sport, prioritisation of school sport (in particular, competitive team sport over individual sports) quickly moved further up the political agenda. Major and a number of other key politicians and Department for Education and Skills (DfES) civil servants were significant in shaping policy change in school sport and PE (Houlihan & Green, 2006). However, Gilroy and Clarke (1997) were critical of the emphasis on competitive team sport arguing that this focus suggested Major believed that school sport was once well organised, which he was naively attempting to restore. The second important change occurred in 1994 when John Major's government established the UK's National Lottery. The advent of the lottery was significant not only due to a percentage of the revenue being distributed to 'good causes', with sport being one of them, but also because it gave central government substantial financial leverage over delivery agents. This provided a new funding stream for sport, the significance of which is discussed in greater detail below.

In addition to these two changes, the policy document *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995) was published in 1995 outlining the government's intention to focus heavily on school and elite level sport. The publication demonstrated the government's plans to develop a sport strategy and was in marked contrast to the lack of interest shown by the previous governments of Margaret Thatcher. In 1996 the Sports Council was restructured into a UK Sports Council (to develop excellence) and an English Sports Council (ESC), which mainly focused on the promotion of participation in England. In January 1997 the ESC announced

that it would concentrate resources on 22 sports it had identified from set criteria (Houlihan & White, 2002).

Throughout John Major's tenure sport continued to remain a relatively prominent policy concern and particularly related to youth. From the mid-1990s sport has been used in attempts to deliver social policy objectives as well as elite sport development (King, 2009). This increased political prioritisation of sport resulted in policy initiatives developing at a faster rate and, in turn, a substantial increase in public funding (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012). The 1990s also witnessed a shift from the target group approach seen during the 1980s to a prioritisation of young people as a broader category. Furthermore, throughout the 1990s *sports equity* remained a principal concern of the Sports Council *Frameworks for Action* (Sports Council, 1993b). The Sports Council then focused attention on the ways in which equity principles could be integrated across all levels of sport development (Bloyce & Smith, 2009). Yet, Houlihan and White (2002, p. 64) noted that such equity policies had a minimal impact on individuals involved with sports development due to "the weak influence of the [Sports] Council at the time, and partly because they did not fit with the immediate priorities and concerns of governing bodies or Conservative-controlled local authorities". In other words, the application of equity principles tended to be confined to young people and not other age groups.

2.4.2 The priority given to community sport

During this period, in addition to the focus on school sport, elite sport once again received much attention. This was very evident when *Sport: Raising the Game* was published. The focus on elite sport was due, in large part, to the lack of success in the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, and the perception that international success could contribute to enhanced national identity and cohesion (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012). As a result of these priorities, community sport continued to be relatively neglected; although school and youth sport remained a priority.

Nonetheless, community sport did receive some attention when the Department of Education and Science published *Sport and Active Recreation* in 1991 (DoES, 1991). Subsequently, the Sports Council published *Sport in the Nineties: New Horizons* (Sports Council, 1993a), which focused on current government policy objectives (young people and excellence) but also paid attention to attempts of increasing mass participation. However, during this period, the Sports Council were required to align their policy with the government objectives, which led

Green (2004, p. 371) to suggest that there was an “ongoing retreat of support for community recreation” during this period.

2.4.3 The role of NGBs and sport clubs

During John Major’s premiership improving school sport became a primary public policy objective due to the perception of school sport decline and Major’s personal enthusiasm for team sports (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012). In the 1990s the government made it a requirement for schools to include traditional competitive team sports as part of the national curriculum; this prioritisation was made clear in the *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995). In their analysis of the document Hylton and Bramham (2007) commented that the Conservative government had reiterated its belief that team sports were fundamental to school sport and should be more evident in both the PE curriculum and extra-curricular activities. This objective was to be achieved by a number of policy initiatives. Including inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and amendments to teacher training for PE teachers (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012).

Although school sport became a key policy, Major’s government allocated little additional public funding to improve school sport (R. Taylor, 2006). Therefore, any additional funding for school sport was made available by rerouting funding that was originally allocated for the Sports Council and NGBs, and through private sector sponsorship (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012). One important example of private philanthropy was the support given in 1994 by Sir John Beckwith to a series of Youth Sport Trust TOP programmes to distribute sports equipment and activity cards to schools. The Trust subsequently attracted additional funding from the Department of Education and Employment and was able to challenge the Sports Council for policy leadership in the area of youth sport (Houlihan & White, 2002).

2.4.4 Conclusion

Overall, the period of John Major’s tenure as the UK Prime Minister proved to be a watershed for sport policy. With an increasing government interest sport moved onto and up the government agenda, which primarily focused on young people and striving for elite success. John Major had a keen personal interest in sport and recognised that elite level success could only be achieved through full time training of athletes, coached to the highest standard, using the latest techniques in sport science; finally putting “the myth of the inspired British amateur to rest” (Houlihan & White, 2002, p. 74). Over time the government required the

means for influence with sport; this was especially the case when the National Lottery was introduced, which helped to fund facility improvements. The final key development was the government's willingness to intervene in sporting matters; a clear example being the restructuring of the national curriculum for PE.

2.5 Blair/Brown governments 1997 – 2010

2.5.1 Developments in sport policy

When the Labour party won the general election in 1997, one of the first changes the new government implemented was to replace the existing DNH with a new Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – the first time sport appeared in the title of a British government department (Bloyce & Smith, 2009). In the same year, the *Best Value* policy was introduced with the aim of modernising local government services, including sport and leisure. The introduction of this policy resulted in changes to the way NGBs received funding; the 'entitlement culture' of the 1960s and 1970s ceased, and funding allocations were now conditional.

The Government, in 1998, established eighteen Policy Action Teams to work on the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. Policy Action Team 10 (PAT 10) focused on how sport and the arts could potentially contribute towards neighborhood renewal and tackle social exclusion. The PAT 10 findings resulted in £750 million being allocated from the New Opportunities Fund for sports facilities for school and community use (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). In 1999 Sport England published *Lottery Fund Strategy* (SEL Fund, 1999) which had two main objectives; to assist local sport for all projects, and to improve medal winning chances at the international level (Green, 2004). In 2000 the Labour government published a policy statement titled *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS, 2000), which set out proposals related to participation and performance sport. The publication reaffirmed many of the objectives set out in *Sport: Raising the Game* (DNH, 1995) but also linked *Best Value* objectives (Green, 2004). Houlihan and White (2002) suggested that there was significant continuity between objectives in *Sport: Raising the Game* and *A Sporting Future for All*. This was reflected in the continued support for elite sports through the establishment of the UK Sports Institute (UKSI) in 2000 and, in turn, the provision of a network of academies (Green, 2004) and in the continued emphasis in school and youth sport.

In 2002 the government released *Game Plan* (DCMS, 2002); the new strategy for delivering the Government's sport and physical activity objectives. Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, stated in the foreword, "we have to tackle the large drop-off in the numbers of people playing sport once they leave full-time education. Young people find it hard to continue their interests. That is why forging links between schools and local clubs is a central responsibility of School Sport Co-ordinators" (DCMS, 2002, p. 8).

The government's concern with sport was reflected in the support for a London bid for the 2012 Olympic Games and was reiterated in 2005 when the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2012 Olympic Games to London. Winning the bid meant that large sums of public investment were to be allocated to London 2012 preparations. Although Team GB enjoyed a very successful 2008 Beijing Olympics (finishing fourth in the medal table) Jeffreys (2013) remarked it became evident that it would be difficult to meet the ambitious participation targets given the attention placed on attempts to achieve London 2012 legacy promises; particularly maintaining a high ranking in the Olympic medal table. By 2009 the half a million increase in numbers playing sport three times a week that was seen between 2005-2008, had stalled (Jeffreys, 2012).

2008 also saw the DCMS focus its sporting priorities on increasing participation and winning medals with the publication of *Playing to win: A new era for sport* (DCMS, 2008). The tagline of the policy was 'When you play sport, you play to win.' This policy document was seen as a major departure from the preceding sport policy statement (*Game Plan*), which concentrated on tackling the issue of the young dropping out of sport; the new policy placed excellence and performance at the heart. Keech (2011) noted that the responsibility for delivery was now firmly in the hands of NGBs of sport since they became the primary recipients of Sport England's funding. The result was that NGBs had to shift the community focus to work towards delivering high performance sport.

2.5.2 The priority given to community sport

Houlihan (2000, p. 175) noted that since 1997, the Labour Government had "begun to make good its policy commitments in the area of sport, but it is notable that there has been far greater progress in addressing the issues associated with the elite end of the sports continuum". As a result, the commitment to grassroots sport during the first few years of New Labour continued to be marginalised, except where it was seen as serving the interests of addressing wider social issues or supporting elite sport development.

Although a fundamental objective of *Game Plan* was to improve international success, the Government argued that this had the potential to influence participation. A wide range of initiatives was established that focused on various social groups, such as the economically disadvantaged, women, young people and older people. Green (2004, p. 372) noted that there was an “increasing policy rhetoric [which] linked sport funding to social inclusion objectives” at that time. Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) suggested that the development of County Sports Partnerships (CSPs) was, in part, a response to some of the criticism of fragmentation and inefficient administrative bureaucracy identified in *Game Plan*. CSPs were set up to enhance sporting opportunities for minority groups, simplify the local sporting infrastructure and, of particular relevance to this research, improve links between VSCs and LAs.

2.5.3 The role of NGBs and sport clubs

The role of NGBs and clubs in helping deliver Government policy objectives expanded during this period. In 2002 *Game Plan* attempted to use sport as a tool for social development and address falling participation levels by working with various interest groups. The Government recognised that they had to work closely with these interest groups, such as local authorities, NGBs, CSPs, the voluntary and private sectors in order to implement policy and deliver the key outcomes. Achieving participation objectives was the responsibility of Sport England who recruited NGBs to deliver government policy. The increase in Sport England and UK Sport funding of NGBs was designed to facilitate these initiatives and modernise NGBs to become more professionalised in their approach and suitable partners for government. As a consequence NGBs were expected to identify and develop grassroots talent from member clubs and form closer links between schools and clubs through School Sport Co-ordinators (SSCs) in an attempt to drive up participation through the School Sport Partnership (SSP) programme, which was phased in during 2006. Not only were the key policy outcomes set for SSPs focused on increasing participation and performance standards but also on increasing the number of qualified coaches and officials in local facilities and VSCs (Bloyce & Smith, 2009).

In another participation initiative the Free Swimming Programme (FSP) was launched in June 2008. The £140m scheme offered free swimming pool use to people aged 16 and under or over 60 in England. The Programme was funded by five government departments: the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Department of Health (DH), the Department for Children, Schools and Families (now the Department of Education (DfE)), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Communities and Local

Government (CLG). Additional investment and resources were provided by Sport England (SE) and by the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA), who were in charge of managing a team of County Swimming Coordinators (CSCs)⁵. This significant involvement from the various government departments and the substantial figure invested in the FSP initiative evidently demonstrated the continued government interest in sport, with a particular focus on delivering participation legacy targets of the 2012 Olympics.

2.5.4 Conclusion

Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) suggested that two clear themes emerge from the review of sport policy under New Labour: first an instrumentalist view of sport; and second the shift in the nature of the relationship between government and VSCs (via their respective NGBs). They suggest that the relationship was now based on contract and audit (Whole Sport Plans) rather than the degree of trust where NGBs and clubs could be trusted to generate social benefit with their allocation of public or lottery funding. By early 2010 public policy objectives for sport were fairly well established around youth participation, elite success, event hosting and the contribution of sport to health improvement and improved educational standards (Houlihan & Lindsey, 2012).

2.6 The Coalition government 2010 – 2015

2.6.1 Developments in sport policy

The Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government was formed in May 2010 and by October of that year a series of drastic spending cuts had been announced. However, with the London 2012 Olympics approaching, the coalition ensured that the funding that New Labour had secured remained guaranteed. Cameron, like the previous Prime Minister, believed that hosting the Olympics would improve trade and contribute towards regeneration and national well-being (Jeffreys, 2012). Therefore, Labour's £9.3 billion budget remained intact, and elite athlete funding was protected in the medium term. Yet, the government received criticism for backtracking on community and school sport support, and for failing to see that sport could be used as a vehicle for addressing wider health and social policy objectives (Jeffreys, 2013).

⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/7973936.stm> (Accessed 03.08.16)

Notwithstanding the criticism, subsequent to the London 2012 Olympics a new mass participation sports legacy was launched, called *Places, People, Play*. Hugh Robertson, the then Minister for Sport and Equalities, stated, “This is the cornerstone of a grassroots legacy from hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games, because it delivers on the bid pledge of enabling more people of all ages and abilities to play sport.”⁶ The £135 million programme aimed to create a grassroots sporting legacy beyond the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The key organisations enlisted to deliver the programme were Sport England, in partnership with the British Olympic Association (BOA) and the British Paralympic Association (BPA) with the backing of The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and the London 2012 Inspire mark⁷. The key elements of the programme are highlighted in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 People, Places, Play programme key elements

Places	People	Play
<p><u><i>Inspired facilities (£50m)</i></u> Clubs, community and voluntary sector groups and councils can apply for grants of between £25,000 and £150,000 where there is a proven local need for a facility to be modernised, extended or modified to open up new sporting opportunities.</p> <p><u><i>Protecting playing fields (£10m)</i></u> <i>Securing the future of many sites for a minimum of 25 years.</i></p> <p><u><i>Iconic facilities (£30m)</i></u> This fund will create local beacons for grassroots sport by supporting innovative large scale multi-sport facilities</p>	<p><u><i>Sport Makers (£4m)</i></u> The aim was to recruit, train and deploy 40,000 Sport Makers across the country who will commit to at least 10 hours of volunteering, so the result will be hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours to support the mass participation legacy.</p>	<p><u><i>Gold Challenge (self-funding organisation but £3m available, if required)</i></u> Gold Challenge aimed to motivate people to take up some or all of the Olympic and Paralympic sports and, in doing so, raise millions of pounds for charity.</p> <p><u><i>Sportivate (£32)</i></u> Thousands of youngsters are able to receive six weeks of coaching at a local venue and receive guidance on the places and people they can continue to play with when the six weeks are up. Sportivate targets everyone aged between 14 and 25.</p>

It is clear from Table 2.1 that NGBs and, in particular, VSCs were now at the core of policy implementation. This is an important shift from the first two policy periods where community sport (particularly VSCs) received little attention in government in their sport policy initiatives.

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-2012-mass-participation-sports-legacy-launched> (Accessed 10.03.15)

⁷ http://archive.sportengland.org/media_centre/press_releases/places_people_play.aspx (Accessed 10.03.15)

In July 2010 David Cameron launched the 'Big Society' initiative, which aimed to empower local communities. The neo-liberal coalition government's stated priorities included: to give communities more power; encourage volunteerism in communities; and transfer power from central to local government. In principle, having a community focus on the political agenda was good news for VSCs but at the time there was no mention of the implementation strategies for clubs or consideration as to whether the sport clubs had the capacity, and willingness, to implement community sport policy (Harris, 2012; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

The next major change in sport policy occurred when the DCMS launched a new youth sport strategy in January 2012, *Creating a sporting habit for life: A new youth sport strategy* (DCMS, 2012). The target age group for this strategy was 14-25 year olds. The DCMS partnered Sport England to implement the policy, committing to investing £1 billion of Lottery and Exchequer funding between 2012 and 2017 to work with schools, colleges, universities, NGBs, CSPs, LAs and other partners in the voluntary sector in an attempt to ensure that young people could regularly play sport and would continue to participate into adult life. While the role of VSCs became more central SE also developed stronger links with organisations outside the VSC/NGB network. For example, Sport England invested £6 million in the charity *StreetGames*, which aimed to set up thousands of 'Doorstep Sports Clubs' and to engage young people in deprived communities in England. The Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust is another example of a partnership that aims to expand the 'Get on Track programme', which sets out to place at least 2,000 youngsters who are on the very margins of society into sports projects that also teach them vital life skills (Sport England, 2012). However, VSCs remained central to another element of the government's sport strategy, which was school sport.

In March 2013 the Government announced £150 million of 'ring-fenced' funding for primary school sport, which would be given directly to head teachers. The announcement stated that there is to be "a greater role for Britain's best sporting and voluntary organisations, including national governing bodies who will increase the specialist coaching and skills development on offer for primary schools" and that "Sport England investing £1.5 million a year of lottery funding through the County Sport Partnerships to help primary schools link up with local sports coaches, clubs and sports governing bodies."⁸

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/olympic-legacy-boost-150-million-for-primary-school-sport-in-england> (Accessed 12.02.16)

The following month, in April 2013, sports minister Hugh Robertson appointed Nick Bitel as the new chair of Sport England. Bitel's primary responsibility was to strengthen grassroots sport across the country. Between 2013 and 2017 Sport England planned to invest £493m into 46 sports NGBs to support their *Whole Sport Plans* (see chapter 5). NGBs submitted current Whole Sport Plans to Sport England in 2012, which outlined how investment from Sport England would help them nurture talent and increase the number of people taking part in their sport⁹. More recently, Sport England invested £324.9 million during 2014/15 in an attempt to get more people doing sport and physical activity. Of this investment £200.3 million was allocated specifically for increasing participation in sport. A further breakdown of the participation funding indicates that NGBs received £46 million¹⁰, which would then be distributed by each NGB in an attempt to develop the participation for their sport. VSCs can then access the resources via grants or funding applications.

2.6.2 The priority given to community sport

Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Education, scrapped Labour's £162-million SSP budget in October 2010, which meant schools had to finance partnerships from their own budgets¹¹. Cryer (2011) noted that with the Chancellor announcing a 28 percent budget cut for communities and local government over four years it would result in £500 million less for sport in communities across the country. Cryer stressed that the £500 million figure was only if the cuts were shared evenly across the Department; experience suggested that sport often took more than its fair share of budget reductions. Partly as a consequence of the budget cuts the previous government's objective of getting an extra million adults each year engaging in physical activity was discreetly dropped from the coalition's agenda. During early 2012 the focus was turned to encouraging young adults to participate in sporting activity once a week, rather than the previous general population target of taking part in sport three times a week. Furthermore, a number programmes that were aimed at increasing participation were cancelled such as the free-swimming initiative.

⁹ <http://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-work/national-governing-bodies/sports-we-invest-in/2013-17-whole-sport-plan-investments/> (Accessed 13.07.14)

¹⁰ <http://www.sportengland.org/funding/our-investments-explained> (Accessed 12.02.16)

¹¹ The outcry resulted in a partial U-turn where £65m a year (not ring-fenced) for school sport was made available until 2013 and an additional £7m-a-year was allocated to the new annual School Games.

2.6.3 The role of NGBs and sport clubs

As a result of the cuts Sport England's budget had to shrink by 33 per cent and absorb the deficit within a few years. Although revenue funding for NGBs was protected until March 2013, Sport England also had to absorb a cut of 40 per cent to its capital budget, which directly affected NGB funding.

NGBs continued to play a pivotal role in increasing participation, particularly among young people. However, NGB funding was allocated through a stricter payment-by-results process although new incentive funds were introduced to enable NGBs that were working particularly well to achieve more. County Sports Partnerships were instructed to support NGBs, foster local links and help transition young people into clubs (Cryer, 2011).

2.6.4 Conclusion

Since 2010 the sense of an integrated government sports policy has been lost; with Michael Gove deciding to terminate Labour's £162 million a year school sport strategy, which supported hundreds of School Sports Partnerships. It was not until early 2012, when the DCMS published *Creating a sporting habit for life: A new youth sport strategy*, that a sport policy received attention on the coalition's agenda. This somewhat fragmented attention for sport policy was primarily due to the government announcing a series of austerity measures, which saw substantial spending cuts in the October 2010 budget.

2.7 Chapter conclusion

The key points identified from this review are that over the five periods there has been a definite trend towards an increasingly interventionist government. There has also been a sustained concern by successive governments to increase participation in sport. However, the commitment by the governments has varied in intensity and the participation figures have been either disappointing or, at best, mixed. Not only has the commitment varied but the focus on policy has also varied over time between sport participation and physical activity and health. As a consequence, this created an uncertain policy environment for VSCs (and NGBs).

The government's Sport Council 'arm's length' is actually 'short-arm's length' with minimal autonomy, and now with funding condition contracts. An increasing contractual relationship

between the government and NGBs/VSCs has developed over time with a payment-by-results approach, such as the whole sport plan targets.

Over time, and particularly in recent years NGBs and VSCs have replaced LAs as the government's primary partner for delivering community sport objectives. Sport England now receive over £1 billion in Exchequer and National Lottery funding between 2012 and 2017¹², much of which is distributed to NGBs and, in turn, to VSCs. VSCs have evolved from autonomous organisations to state dependant organisations due to the widening of VSCs remit to include social and health objectives. However, there has been disappointment with the outcome of NGB/VSC-focused delivery. Consequently, there was a move to a mixed economy in an attempt to achieve targets with SE partners.

¹² <https://www.sportengland.org/about-us/> (Accessed 12.02.16)

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter is to introduce public policy implementation, which is the central concept for analysis. Secondly, it is to determine a suitable theoretical framework to enable examination of public policies in the case studies. The structure of this chapter commences with a brief discussion of the subject of public policy. The concept of implementation is then introduced, offering the two contrasting theoretical schools of thought, highlighting positives and negatives for each distinct approach. A synthesis of the two approaches is then provided. The next section provides a discussion of how the concept of power is closely linked to public policy theoretical frameworks in the literature. Then, a number of meso-level theories are proposed to guide analysis and, finally, a discussion recommending the most appropriate theoretical framework to guide the empirical research.

3.2 Public policy

Cairney (2011) suggested the reason public policy is studied is because we want to know why certain decisions are made when there are often many policy responses to a situation or problem. There is not one single definition of the term 'policy' in the literature but it is often used 'within government agencies to describe a range of different activities that include: defining objectives; setting priorities; describing a plan and specifying decision rules' (Hill, 1997, p. 8). Policy has also been defined as 'the programmatic activities formulated in response to an authoritative decision. These activities are the policy designer's plans for carrying out the wishes expressed by a legitimating organisation, be it a legislature, a judicial agent, or an executive body' (Matland, 1995, p. 154). A succinct definition of policy is provided by Pressman and Wildavsky (1992) as a 'hypothesis containing initial conditions and predicted consequences' (p. xxii). Houlihan (2005) defined public policy as, 'policies that originate within, or are dependent upon the resources of, the state' (p. 165).

The study of public policy is complex as the process is often unpredictable and theories are shaped from a range of disparate perspectives. Analysis can concentrate on: how individual policy-makers understand policy problems; consideration of their beliefs; the

institution and rules policy-makers follow; the powerful groups that have the ability to influence policies; socio-economic contexts; and, the examination of the pressures governments face when making policy (Cairney, 2011). It is these widespread and varying perspectives that make public policy a confusing process and complicated to analyse and comprehend.

Historically, two main approaches have been adopted for policy-making analysis. Some researchers (e.g. Hogwood & Gunn, 1984) assumed a classic linear process from identification of a policy problem, formulation of policy proposals through to implementation and finally an evaluation phase. This offers a 'prescriptive' approach that endeavours to demonstrate how policy-makers *should* act to ensure systematic decision-making, based on the assumption that the numerous factors, which have the potential to influence the process can be adequately taken into account, if not controlled.

In contrast, others (e.g. Hjern, Hanf, & Porter, 1978) regard policy-making as an unavoidably political activity where interests and interpretations of actors transform the policy process and, in particular, cause a profound effect on the implementation phase of the process (Cairney, 2011). This approach provides a 'descriptive' model that explains how policy-makers *actually* operate. In this interpretation, unlike the rational model (a decision-making process where each chosen course of action sequentially follows on from the previous step), the policy implementation phase becomes open to negotiation in a competitive or conflictual environment. Hill (1997, p. 7) indicated that 'the process itself is characterised by diversity and constraint'. This important phase of the policy-making process, perceived to be open to negotiation and greatly affected by political activity, is the focus for this research. To enable analysis of the implementation phase of the policy cycle the most appropriate analytical framework need to be identified.

3.3 The concept of power

For a thorough examination of public policy implementation it is important to consider the conceptualisation of power within the potential analytical frameworks. However, some of the frameworks are more explicit than others in identifying the way in which power is conceptualised.

The concept of power in organisations has been studied for many decades yet notions of power are still contested (Kidd, Legge, & Harari, 2009). This is primarily due to the difficulty of observing and measuring what actually constitutes power. Although power is a central concept in political science, there is difficulty gathering evidence of the nature and exercise of power, particularly in public policy analysis as a result of its wide range of interpretations. That said, a succinct definition of power offered by Byers, Slack, & Parent (2012, p. 121) suggests power is ‘the ability to influence the behaviour or ideas of one or more people’, that is, power is in principle, about an individual getting what they want.

To develop understanding of the policy process (including the implementation phase), broader assumptions – set in a wider context – about the nature of the policy process and the distribution of power in society need to be considered. The main macro theories of power are pluralism, corporatism and Marxism. Each theory will now be introduced.

Pluralism is based on low concentrations of government and private power (Rommetvedt, 2000), which ultimately suggests that power is fragmented and dispersed throughout society. This leads to decisions being made following complex negotiations, bargaining and interactions. This widespread view of power was rebuked by elitists (and Marxists), who suggest pluralists hold a narrow view by only recognising one face of power (subsequently discussed). However, modern pluralists have adopted more of a critical view of power in society arguing that power is more centralised but with unequal access to key resources that would be used in efforts to gain political influence. *Corporatism* is disparate to pluralism, characterised by high concentrations of government power in addition to private power (Rommetvedt, 2000). The assumption is that there is a closer interrelationship between societal interest groups and the state that collaborate in attempts to gain power. The central principle of Marxism is that power is embedded in class theory. It assumes that power is reflected by the distribution of economic power and suggests that power is concentrated on the few who control production in their pursuit of economic gain. In other words, the economic base determines the superstructure of society, which include its ideological and political institutions (Strinati, 2004). To sum up these macro-level theories, the distinction is that power is either restricted between a few supreme interest groups, or power is not focused with these state/elite groups and is dispersed amongst groups and organisations throughout society. Then, for understanding the power relationships in the process of implementation, within this particular sport context, it would be reasonable to suggest that pluralism (potential negotiations at VSC level) and corporatism (Sport England and NGBs likely working closely together in

attempts to take a strong line on implementation of *Clubmark*) would be most suitable theories, given the Marxist one-dimensional view of power entirely related to economic factors.

Moving away from the macro theories, the most appropriate starting point in an attempt to understand power in policy analysis is within the decision-making process. Cairney (2011 p. 46) questions who is actually responsible for policy change? Who is in charge of the decision-makers? Who thinks they are in charge? Can policy-makers or powerful groups force or resist any opposition? Or are hidden forms of power such as manipulation utilised? He suggests that to answer these types of question, discussions on power should include informal sources of influence as well as the general discourse that tends to focus on individuals exercising power, the role of institutions and formal authority.

One of the most prominent interpretations of power is that offered by Steven Lukes (1974). Lukes focuses on the methods individuals (and groups) use to achieve their objectives and hence, how to get others to act in a certain way. He proposed that to understand power, the concept needs to be considered in a broad sense and offers three faces (dimensions) of power:

The **first dimension** of power focuses on observable conflict and decision-making where the behaviour or actions of individuals can be witnessed. Lukes (1974) argued that the work of Weber (2012 [1947], 1956) is a restricted and narrow interpretation of power, only dealing with the first of the three faces of power. Weber suggested a pluralistic notion of power; that policy results from the interactions of (or competition between) many individuals or groups (Cairney, 2011) through rational decision making processes.

- Decision making – the ability to make and implement policy decisions. An example of this dimension could be where a sports coach decides that the club's athletes will not be allowed to attend training if they do not bring their drinks bottle to the session.

Criticisms of this narrow pluralist decision-making view emphasised that power can be exercised through the **second dimension** in non-decision making situations (Bachrach & Baratz, 1964; Lukes, 2005). That is, individuals (or groups) limiting issues to be considered for decision making through exercising power. This dimension is an example of the elitist subjectivist view and is an extension of the first dimension.

- Non-decision making – the ability to control policy decisions. Agenda setting enables dictating a situation that results in ‘real’ power. Powerful actors can restrict and divert issues away from policy-makers.

The **third dimension** is the face that Lukes (1974) advocates to be the most effective; that is when power is least observable. This dimension has been coined ‘the radical view’ that provides criticism of the first two dimensions which suggest conflict is a fundamental attribute of power. However, Knights & Willmott (1985) and Robson & Cooper (1989) have criticised this third dimension for assuming individuals act against their objective interests and not appreciating what their (subjective) interests may be.

- Ideological power – the ability to influence or manipulate thoughts of others. This includes shaping desires covertly, which can be achieved through social forces and institutional practices. An example of this dimension could be described as the way that members of right-wing groups are brainwashed into accepting the authority of their leaders so that they do not even question being told to do things that may not be in their best interests (Kidd et al., 2009).

Accordingly, it is important that this interpretation of power is considered when employing analytical frameworks when examining implementation. With a top-down approach it would be reasonable to assume the central policy actors exercise forms of power by making decisions (and non-decisions) in relation to implementation. From a bottom-up perspective it would be reasonable to assume that policy implementers could exercise forms of power (possibly all three dimensions of Lukes’ (1974) interpretation), which would occur at the street-level amongst volunteers running the VSCs.

3.4 Frameworks for analysis

Over the last 50 years concern with public policy analysis has gained momentum. Numerous analytic frameworks from different theoretical perspectives have been developed. A selection of potential frameworks will now be discussed. The suitability of four meso-level frameworks extensively applied in policy research will now be reviewed. These are: the Stages Model; Policy Networks; Advocacy Coalition Framework; Institutional Analysis and Multiple Streams. The frameworks are regarded as being appropriately developed, intellectually robust and have the capacity to demonstrate the relationship between a government and public policies (Houlihan, 2005).

3.4.1 Stages model

As public policy research gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, the most dominant framework used by theorists was the stages model (Houlihan, 2005). As the name suggests, the model assumes organisational rationality by dividing the policy process into individual stages. Hogwood & Gunn (1984) developed nine stages of a policy process, depicted in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1 Hogwood & Gunn's (1984) Policy Stages Model

Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) proposal of a stages model can be used to analyse a policy process as a whole but as Houlihan (2005) notes, often scholars have focused on a particular stage in the process. For example, Kingdon (1997) has studied agenda setting, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) studied implementation and Guba and Lincoln (1989) focused their work on policy evaluation.

The value of the stages model allows characteristics of the policy process to be highlighted to the researcher. However, weaknesses of the framework is that it is overly descriptive (rather than presenting causal explanations) and the assumption that each stage is sequentially linear is often criticised as being overly simplistic (e.g. Sabatier, 2007). Further, John (2012, p. 19) suggests the policy process is not best represented as a linear

model due to the 'messiness of policy making' as a consequence of the 'twists and turns of decisions' that often results in governments not introducing policy as promised.

Drawing attention to the implementation phase, this model naively matches the rational assumption of the top-down theoretical approach. As this chapter has highlighted, implementation is often not that straightforward.

3.4.2 Policy networks

It has been suggested that organisations occupy 'policy space' (Downs, 1967) or 'policy territory' (G. Jordan & Richardson, 1987) which they defend against invaders. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) propose that a 'policy network' is series of networks along a continuum. At one end are *issue networks* and at the other *policy communities*. Issue networks are characterised as having: large fluctuating membership; limited interaction; conflicting policy preferences; group leaderships who cannot deliver members; and interaction that is often a zero-sum game. According to Helco (1978, p. 102; 2009):

Looking for the few who are powerful, we tend to overlook the many of those webs of influence provoke and guide the exercise of power. These webs, or what I will call 'issue networks', are particularly relevant to the highly intricate and confusing welfare policies that have been undertaken in recent years.

In contrast to issue networks policy communities are characterised as having: a limited number of members, with others excluded; continuity of membership; frequent high quality interaction between members; broadly shared policy preferences; an acceptance of the legitimacy of outcomes from the network; members who all have resources which they exchange; leaders who can deliver membership support for outcomes; and a broad balance of power between members, so it is a positive-sum game (Marsh & Rhodes, 1992, p. 251; Marsh, Toke, Belfrage, Tepe, & McGough, 2009). In other words, a policy community is 'a relatively small group of participants in the policy process which has emerged to deal with some identifiable class of problems (Laffin, 1986).

Scharpf (1978) argued that policy formulation and implementation is the unavoidable result of the interactions amongst the diverse range of actors all with individual interests and strategies. Coordination between actors is the major problem of implementation yet public policy-making is the only method by which solutions to societies problems can be developed in a democracy. Therefore, policy networks (or communities) that contain both state and non-state actors enable the most effective coordination.

Rather than view policy networks or communities as a threat to policy implementation (and as a way in which powerful interest groups protect their interests and undermine the policy objectives of the government), they need to be considered as crucial to effective implementation since they reduce policy conflict, make policy more predictable and relate well to the departmental structure of the government.

Having said that, do policy communities or networks relate to sport? There is increasing evidence of sub-sectors (such as elite sport and school sport) significantly influencing policy rather than just one sporting policy community (Oakley & Green, 2001). These sub-sectors are currently high on the Government policy agenda. However, both remain dependent on spill over from other policy sectors. Therefore, with this ambiguity (within the sporting context) it was decided that this framework would not help to develop the implementation analysis.

3.4.3 Advocacy coalition framework (ACF)

The ACF draws on top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy analysis and gives technical information a more prominent role in policy process theory (Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 2007). The ACF is based on five assumptions:

- a time perspective of at least 10 years is required for the analysis of policy change;
- a focus on policy subsystems/policy communities;
- sub-systems involve actors from different levels of government and from different international organisations and other countries;
- the possession and use of technical information is important; and
- public policy involves implicit 'sets of value priorities and causal assumptions about how to realize them.' (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994, p. 187)

Two further assumptions have been included as part of the fundamental ACF assumptions:

- three to five coalitions may emerge in each policy sub-sector; and
- policy brokers mediate between coalitions.

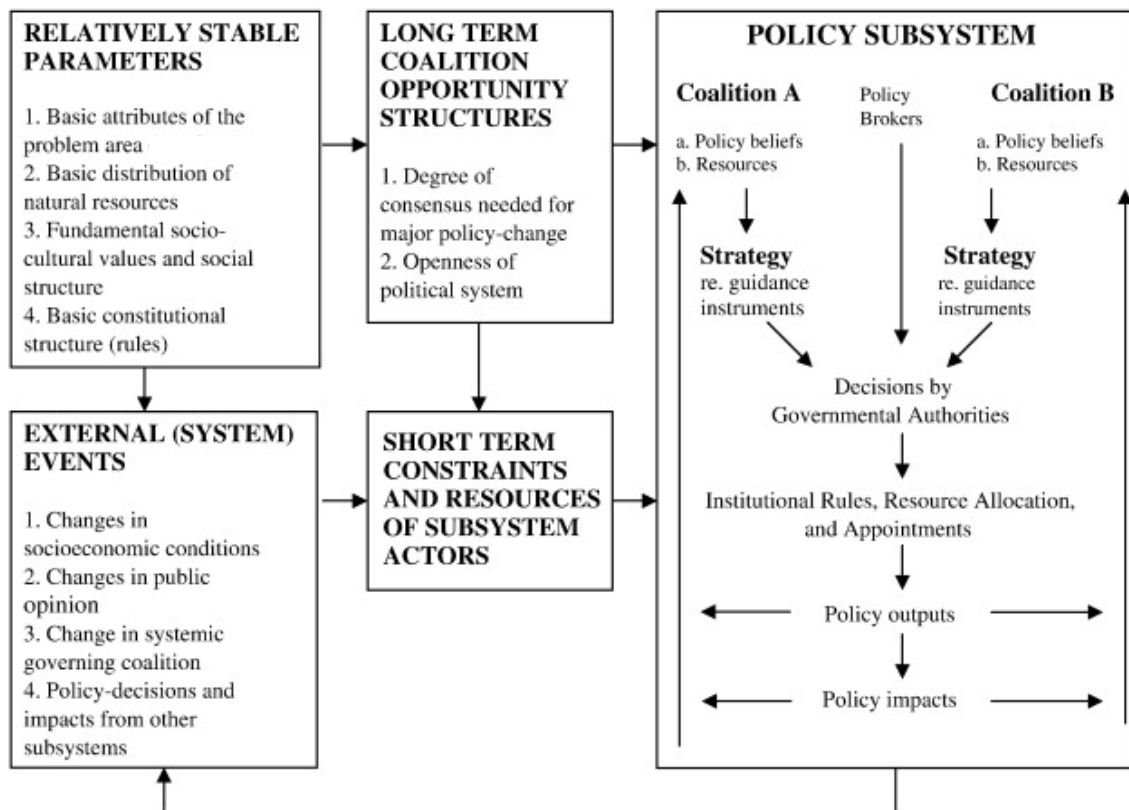


Figure 3.2 The ACF framework adapted from Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith (2007)

The ACF depicted in Figure 3.2 potentially offers a connection between ideas and coalition formation in the policy subsystems that seeks to map changes in coalitions (often as a result of changes external to the subsystem) and by changing the values, belief systems and policy learning (which are internal to the policy subsystem).

The ACF has previously been utilised as an analytical tool for sport policy analysis. Green and Houlihan (2004) successfully identified and analysed key sources of policy change in the UK and Canada through the insights provided by the ACF. They commented that the framework 'generally proved a useful tool for analysing the complex, fluid, multi-layered and often fragmented sport policy-making process in both Canada and the UK' (p. 400). However, weaknesses of the framework, according to Green and Houlihan (2004), include that it does not more effectively consider the social interactions of the actors within the coalitions, and that the framework needed to engage more explicitly with the notion of power.

Skille (2008) reviews the modified ACF offered by Houlihan (2005) for the suitability to analyse the implementation of central government sport policy through local and

voluntary sport organisations in Norway. Skille argues that sport clubs, the local sports council and the municipality could be considered a coalition aiming at making and implementing local sport policy. He proposes that although the modified ACF has been the most successful framework for analysing national-level sport policy (e.g. Houlihan & Green, 2008; Houlihan & White, 2002), the theory (as with top-down approaches) does not pay enough attention to the sport clubs; the body that executes the implementation of sport policy.

To summarise, the ACF is useful in drawing attention to the interplay between internal and external factors that can influence and affect policy implementation. However, it is difficult to conceptualise values and belief systems and in turn, accurately measure their impact.

3.4.4 Institutional analysis

Implementation research often relies heavily on literature from institutionalism. Nearly every policy and initiative is contingent on institutional action (O'Toole Jr., 2000). Within the institutionalism literature, two schools of thought have emerged; the first considers institutions as physical organisational entities such as structures, departments, agencies and parliaments while the other interpretation focuses on cultural explanations such as norms, belief systems and shared values (Houlihan, 2005).

A strength of institutional analysis is that it allows the researcher to examine both organisational structures and the behaviour of actors within such structures (Hall, 1986) and also highlights the significance of state institutions in the policy process (Houlihan, 2005). The primary weakness of this framework is that it is not easy to evaluate policy dynamics meaning it is difficult to explain policy stability and change.

The institutional analysis framework has previously been utilised in sport policy analysis. Skille (2004, 2005) applied neo-institutionalism in the analysis of Norwegian sport policy. The analyses were based on two classic studies; the 'rationalised myth' explained by Meyer and Rowan (1991) and Powell and DiMaggio's (1991) work on isomorphic processes. Skille (2004) remarked that neo-institutionalism has received substantial criticism; first, it is claimed that neo-institutionalism only explains homogeneity within an organisational field and second, the framework does not consider the internal and

strategic components of an organisation, there is too much attention focussed on external pressures when explaining institutional change.

Given the fact that implementation analysis is most effective when conducted over a period of time – and within that timeframe the policy is likely to change (receive updates/iterations/experience implementation difficulties or decay) – then, due to the weakness of the framework lacking the ability to explain change it was rejected for this study.

3.4.5 Multiple streams

John Kingdon (1997) proposed a Multiple Streams framework based on the ‘garbage can’ theory where ‘various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants as they are generated’ (Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972, p. 2). Kingdon’s (1997) suggestion is that public policies emerge when policy entrepreneurs capitalise on a political (opportunity) stream by presenting a problem stream with a policy stream. Houlihan and Lindsey (2012) describe the three streams:

- Problem stream – situations that arise as problematic to groups that become interested. Governments are often prompted to ‘recognise’ a problem as a result of crisis, such as sexual abuse of children by sports coaches during the 1990s (Brackenridge & Telfer, 2011) or the statistics from the routine publication of the Active People Survey regarding sport participation trends.
- Policy stream – policies or ideas that are usually developed within specialist policy communities and which relate to specific problems or classes of problem. Policies that are deemed easier to implement attract a higher level of support within a policy community (from key actors, such as public officials and pressure groups) are more likely to be adopted.
- Politics stream – independent of the other two streams, comprising a number of elements, which can include the national mood (sentiment towards issues among voters), organised political forces (e.g. political parties and interest groups), and turnover within government (e.g. a change of sports minister) (p. 19-20).

When these three streams come together it is termed as ‘coupling’, which creates a ‘policy window’ (of opportunity) for policy entrepreneurs to ‘push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems’ (1995, p. 165). The policy window can appear and disappear unpredictably, which can result in disorderly policy-making; hence, the ‘garbage can’ metaphor.

The Multiple Streams framework has often been employed to examine public policy. A literature search for the terms “policy implementation +/& multiple streams” was conducted to identify any previous studies (with that particular combination of concept and analysis model). The search yielded only three journal publications that explicitly dealt with both concepts; one in the United Kingdom that examined how health inequalities get onto the governments’ policy agenda and its implementation (Exworthy, Berney, & Powell, 2002), and two studies in Africa (DeJaeghere, Chapman, & Mulkeen, 2006; Ridde, 2009). DeJaeghere et al. (2006) used the framework to assess the feasibility of strategies offered to tackle teacher shortages using a mixed-methods approach. Using data from a health policy initiative, Ridde (2009) adopted a bottom-up perspective to consider whether the Multiple Streams framework is useful for examining public policy implementation at the local level in the context of a low-income country. Ridde’s findings suggest that the framework could prove fruitful for policy implementation analysis only if the Multiple Streams framework is extended.

In Houlihan’s (2005) evaluation of the adequacy of the Multiple Streams framework for sport policy analysis, a weakness identified was the preoccupation with agenda setting that resulted in a significant neglect of implementation. Consequently, due to the lack of empirical validation of its suitability and the apparent extension of the framework required to analyse implementation, the Multiple Streams model was deemed to be unsuitable as the primary analytical framework for this research but would likely be a useful complementary model to help organise data (to improve the understanding within the sport context) for the analysis whilst employing the implementation-specific analytical frameworks.

3.4.6 Analytical framework discussion

Subsequent to reviewing the five meso-level frameworks above it became apparent that all suffer the same general weakness, which is a relative neglect of the implementation phase of the policy process. However, the Multiple Streams framework could potentially fulfill a useful function of organising the relationship between policy and implementation. In addition, as highlighted by hybrid theorists in the literature, top-down and bottom-up approaches appear best suited at different times of the implementation process. A hybrid model, such as Matland’s (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict matrix, emerges as the most appropriate perspective to adopt, which would complement the selected top-down and

bottom-up approaches. Furthermore, to help organise and set a context for the understanding of implementation during analysis, particularly within the VSC environment, Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams meso-level framework will be adopted where appropriate. Having a greater appreciation of the actors involved in the process and the political mood within the VSC contexts will allow for the most appropriate application of the theoretical framework to yield a rich data set.

3.5 Policy implementation

Michael Hill and Peter Hupe (2009) remarked that for many years, even though scholars from a range of backgrounds and disciplines have often alluded to the concept of implementation, few explicitly address or examine the concept. When implementation has been referenced the meaning of implementation has taken on different meanings in the various institutional settings.

It is widely recognised in the literature (e.g. Hill & Hupe, 2009; Hjern, 1982; Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; O'Toole Jr., 2000, 2004; Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975) that the publication of Pressman & Wildavsky's (1973) study of implementation generated a sharp upturn in attention amongst academics. The thought-provoking publication caused the realisation that the majority of initiatives introduced by liberal administrations of the 1960s (particularly in the United States) did not bring about lasting change (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). The result of this awareness was an increase in the volume of research that positioned public policy research around the concept of implementation; often prompted by attempts to understand policy failures.

3.5.1 Theoretical perspectives of implementation

The concept of implementation principally describes the process of putting a proposal or strategy (usually a public policy) into effect. Barbara Fernman (1990) offers a concise definition suggesting that implementation is what occurs between policy expectations and (perceived) policy results. Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980, p. 540) state that 'implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually made in a statute (although also possible through important executive orders or court decisions)'. Similarly, O'Toole Jr. (2000 p. 266) interpreted policy implementation as 'what develops between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of government to do something, or stop doing something, and the ultimate impact in the world of action'.

In Peter DeLeon's (1999) review of the development of implementation research, he suggested that Fernman's (1990) definition encompassed many of the 'first generation' studies of implementation (such as, Pressman & Wildavsky's (1973) work). This first generation research generally offered a description (rather than a prescriptive or normative solution) of problems generated by implementation.

As the study of policy implementation progressed, two contrasting theoretical approaches emerged. Goggin, Bowman, Lester, & O'Toole (1990) coined these two new waves of research as 'second generation' studies. The so-called second generation included theorists, such as, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) and Hogwood and Gunn (1984). These theorists subscribed to the 'top-down' approach, which viewed policy makers as fundamental to the policy process. Consequently, attention focused on factors that could be influenced from a central level (Matland, 1995). The top-down analysis began with a policy decision, then examined the extent to which the objectives were achieved, over time, and why they may or may not have been successful (Sabatier, 1986).

In contrast, the 'bottom-up' theorists, such as Lipsky (1980) and Hjern and Hull (1982), viewed the local-level as fundamental, proposing that it is on service deliverers that attention should be focused (Matland, 1995). Unlike the top-down approach, this perspective focused on the strategies actors use to achieve policy objectives or to cope with the expectations of policy makers. As a result, the implementation of a policy was seen as vulnerable to personal interpretation and political negotiation. For that reason, the bottom-up process is not linear. The two distinct so-called 'second generation' theoretical approaches will now be discussed in greater detail.

3.5.2 Top-down approach

A central assumption of top-down theory is organisational rationality. That is, organisations are homogeneous and monolithic with the policy process following a linear trajectory. These assumptions are ideals, which can then be compared to reality. The primary motives of top-down theorists are to: prevent policy dilution; strengthen management control over implementation (to contribute toward success); offer prescription rather than analysis; and, avoid implementation failures.

Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) were two of the first theorists to produce a conceptual framework from the 'single authority top-down' perspective for implementation. The

research concentrated on how a single authoritative decision was carried out at either a single or multiple sites (Goggin et al., 1990). For their empirically orientated model, Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) proposed that implementation analysis required three broad factors to be identified that could affect the achievement of objectives throughout the process; namely: tractability of the problem(s); the ability of the statute to favourably structure the implementation process; and, the effect of political variables on the balance of support for statutory objectives. These factors were then developed into a set of sixteen independent variables that could be hypothesised for influencing goal compliance (Matland, 1995).

In some instances, implementation of a policy is not successful and this was often a focus of the top-down approach. Unsuccessful implementation occurs when a policy is put into practice, which has not been adversely affected by external factors and yet still fails to achieve the intended outcomes (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). A country not reaching their medal target at a major Games is an example of unsuccessful implementation. Kaufman (1973) proposed three general explanations for unsuccessful implementation:

1. The communications process – effective implementation requires the implementers to fully understand their role. However, by the time instruction reaches the point of delivery, decay has often occurred
2. The capability problem – the ability to implement policies may be governed by an organisation's capacity to carry out its expected role (such as inadequate information or financial resources or incompetent staff)
3. Dispositional conflicts – that occur when implementers disregard the objectives of their manager which could be due to numerous reasons such as personal loyalties or self-interests (Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975).

Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) offered another noteworthy top-down model. Like Sabatier and Mazmanian, they examined how closely related the actions of the individuals (and target groups) implementing policies are with the actual objectives contained in an authoritative decision (Matland, 1995). Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) claimed that the majority of implementation studies generally only focused on one of the three explanations for unsuccessful implementation, whereas, they attempted to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation process by considering all three explanations. Six groups of variables were identified that they suggested affected the delivery of public services: the relevance of policy standards and objectives; policy resources; inter-organisational communication and enforcement activities; the characteristics of the implementing agencies; the economic, social, and political

environment affecting the implementing jurisdiction or organisation; and, the disposition of implementers for the carrying out of policy decisions.

When a policy is not put into effect as intended as a result of barriers – obstacles beyond the policy-makers' control or because those involved in delivering the policy are incompetent or have been uncooperative – this is referred to as 'implementation failure' (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). In an article reflecting on three decades of implementation studies, Barrett (2004) outlined the key factors top-down theorists suggest cause implementation failure:

1. Lack of clear policy objectives; leaving room for differential interpretation and discretion in action.
2. Multiplicity of actors and agencies involved in implementation; problems of communication and co-ordination between the 'links in the chain'.
3. Inter- and intra-organisational value and interest differences between actors and agencies; problems of differing perspectives and priorities affecting policy interpretations and motivation for implementation.
4. Relative autonomies among implementing agencies; limits of administrative control.

The factors that Barrett recommended are comparable to Kaufman's general explanations for unsuccessful implementation, which is often the focus for a top-down approach. In fact, a classical top-down study would predominantly focus on explaining why an objective is achieved or not, by examining clear goal statements and some preconditions seen necessary to achieve perfect implementation (Hill, 1997b). Hogwood and Gunn (1984) note that perfect implementation is unattainable but suggest 10 conditions that would have to be satisfied to achieve perfect implementation:

1. The **circumstances external** to the implementing agency **do not impose crippling constraints** (some obstacles (physical or political) to implementation are outside the control of the administrators).
2. That **adequate time and sufficient resources** are made available to the programme (partly overlaps the first but some policies that are physically or politically feasible may still fail. A common reason is that too much is expected too soon, especially when attitude or behaviour change is involved).
3. That the required **combination of resources is actually available** (resources are available throughout the implementation process).
4. That the policy to be implemented is **based upon a valid theory** of cause and effect (policies are sometimes ineffective because they are based on inadequate understanding of the problem to be solved).

5. That the relationship between cause and effect is direct and that there are **few if any, intervening links** (the longer the chain of causality (implementation stages), the greater the risk that some of them will be poorly conceived or badly executed).
6. That **dependency relationships are minimal** (a single implementing agency rather than multiple agencies will greatly increase the chance of 'perfect implementation').
7. That there is **understanding of, and agreement on, objectives** (objectives are often poorly understood, perhaps because communications downwards and outwards from headquarters are inadequate. Even if objectives have initially been understood and agreed, it doesn't mean this will continue throughout the lifetime of the programme since goals are susceptible to succession, multiplication, expansion, and displacement).
8. That **tasks are fully specified in correct sequence** (network planning and control techniques can be used to keep a programme on track and it is also desirable/inevitable that there should be room for discretion and improvisation).
9. That there is **perfect communication and co-ordination** (perfect communication is unattainable but management information systems can help matching information flow to needs).
10. That those in authority can demand and **obtain perfect compliance** (conflicts of interest may occur which cause disruption. With major departures from previous policies and practices there is a high probability of suspicion or resistance from affected individuals or groups. This is perceived by Hogwood & Gunn (1984) as perhaps the least attainable condition of perfect implementation).

In sum, the top-down approach aims to develop generalisable policy advice placing emphasis on the ability of policy makers to produce clear-cut policy objectives that can be implemented from the central level following a sequential process (Matland, 1995; Pülzl & Treib, 2007). However, DeLeon (1999, p. 316) criticises one of the most established top-down frameworks suggesting Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980) 'were not as precise in measurement as they might have wanted (legislation clarity and administrative skill level, for example)'. Here, DeLeon is suggesting that it would have been difficult to produce accurate results when testing Sabatier and Mazmanian's (1980) proposed hypotheses using the independent variables that they offered. Further criticisms of the top-down approach ensued which was, in part, prompted by the increasing study of service delivery; that is, front-line implementation (Peters & Pierre, 2007).

3.5.3 Bottom-up (street-Level) approach

Bottom-up theorists view the scores of actors interacting at the operational (local) level as the key focus for analysis, rather than choosing a policy decision as a starting point

(Sabatier, 1986). Bottom-up theorists view the top-down approach as interesting but unrealistic. Michael Lipsky (1980) developed the concept 'street-level bureaucracy' when referring to 'the schools, police and welfare departments, lower courts, legal services offices, and other agencies whose workers interact with and have wide discretion over the dispensation of benefits or the allocation of public sanctions' (p. xi). The decisions of street level bureaucrats, their routines they establish, and the ways they cope with pressures (such as time) effectively become the public policies they are implementing which the central policy-makers have little (if any) control over.

In challenging the traditional policy-centred top-down approach Hjern, Hanf, and Porter (1978) and Hjern and Porter (1981) argued that, as a result of the complex relationships that form the implementation process, outcomes may not necessarily relate directly to policy objectives. Hjern and Porter (1981) claimed that programmes are rarely ever fully implemented by a single organisation; a cluster of sections of both public and private organisations implements the policy. These interconnected clusters of companies, governments, and associations make up the framework of multi-organisational programmes (that provide numerous important services) are defined as the *implementation structures*. Hjern and Porter (1981) proposed that implementation structures are 'phenomenological administrative units' that could provide an improved unit of analysis rather than evaluating implementation outcomes against specific policy goals.

One additional point that should be considered is that implementation structures differ in their relative cohesiveness (geographically and over time), which results in some structures being regular, while others are undeveloped and ad hoc. Hjern and Porter (1981, p. 223) suggested that 'the more developed and regular structures are, they can be accurately described as *networks* of relationships in which participants have rather settled expectations about each other's actions'.

Hjern and Hull (1982b) understood that organisations are rarely if ever homogenous and monolithic, but rather as contain coalitions competing for control. In addition, the boundaries of large organisations were seen to be permeable. The bottom-up approach of Hjern et al. (1978) starts by identifying the network of actors involved in service delivery at the local level. The actors are then questioned about their goals, strategies, activities, and contacts. These contacts are then used as a point of entry to identify the local, regional, and national actors involved in the planning, financing, and execution of policy

initiatives. This network technique enables the researchers to move from the insights gained at the street level up to the policy-makers at the 'top' i.e. actors central to the policy making process (Hjern et al., 1978; Hjern and Porter, 1981; Sabatier, 1986). In questioning the street-level actors, bottom-up theorists claim it is possible to identify the implementation networks that emerge to suit the street-level environment.

Barrett and Fudge (1981) described the implementation process as the 'policy-action relationship', challenging the traditional top-down policy-centred managerial perspective. They argued that implementation should be treated as an integral part of the policy process, not an administrative follow-on as had often been the case in the past. Policy should be regarded as 'both a statement of intent by those seeking to change or control behaviour, and a negotiated output emerging from the implementation process' (Barrett, 2004, p. 253). The negotiated perspective suggests that the focus should be directed toward relationships and interactions of actors who are part of the process, which are seen as key factors that can shape policy results and implementation outcomes. Further, Hupe and Hill (2007) suggested the decisions that dictate action in public policy are 'nested in a multi-dimensional institutional system' (p. 295) and that a policy system involves 'a nested sequence of decisions – about structure, financing and about the management of outputs – for which different actors may be accountable, perhaps in different ways' (Hill, 2005, p. 277-278). That is, the policy process is not linear and decisions often are not determined centrally.

To summarise, bottom-up theorists focus attention on service deliverers, target groups and the day to day context within which they operate, maintaining that policy is made at the local level, and as a consequence policy-makers would be unable to control the process (Matland, 1995). However, caution must be exercised with this perspective since it appears to largely neglect, or at least significantly downplay, the role of hierarchical management. With that caveat in mind, the advantages and disadvantages of each approach will now be discussed in greater detail.

3.5.4 Top-down versus bottom-up?

In the early 1980s public policy debate was preoccupied with the two contrasting models of implementation studies. Bottom-up theorists such as Barrett and Fudge (1981), and Hjern and Hull (1982) agreed that the top-down approach is a valuable model, however, they argued that starting the analysis from the perspective of central (top level) policy-

makers is a critical flaw as it overlooks the role of other actors. Top-down theorists such as Sabatier (1986) acknowledge the strength of the bottom-up methodology specifically developed by Hjern, Hanf, and Porter (1978) for identifying a policy network that can be replicated. However, Sabatier (1986) warns that focussing on low-level actors, the importance of the periphery could be ‘overemphasised’.

In general, top-down theorists have a strong desire to present prescriptive advice, while bottom-up theorists concentrate their efforts on analysing the factors that have caused difficulty in reaching stated goals (Matland, 1995). Table 3.1 summarises the key differences between the two approaches.

Table 3.1 Differences between top-down and bottom-up implementation

Variables	Top-Down Perspective	Bottom-Up Perspective
Policy decision-maker	Policy-makers	Street-level bureaucrats
Starting Point	Statutory language	Social problems
Structure	Formal	Both formal and informal
Process	Purely administrative	Networking (including administration)
Authority	Centralisation	Decentralisation
Analysis Goal	Prescriptive/prediction/Advice	Descriptive/explanation
Discretion/Democracy	Top-level bureaucrats/Elite	Bottom-level bureaucrats/Participation

Source: Adapted from Paudel (2009) and Pülzl & Treib (2007)

There are three main criticisms top-downers face. First, such models choose the starting point by focusing on statutory language, which, it is argued, fails to consider the significant actions earlier in the policy-making process. As a consequence, this omission could potentially generate implementation barriers (Matland, 1995; Winter, 2003). Second, the top-down approach is criticised for assuming a purely administrative process that largely ignores political aspects (Berman, 1978; Eaton Baier, March, & Saetren, 1986). Finally, the most common criticism of the top-down model is their sole focus on the policy-makers who see ‘local actors as impediments to successful implementation, agents whose shirking behaviour needs to be controlled’ (Matland, 1995, p. 148).

There are two major criticisms that bottom-up theorists face. The first is that this approach places too much significance on the level of local autonomy by largely neglecting any hierarchical control. With concentrating attention on the street-level actors, questions have been raised concerning the representativeness of data collected. For example, Matland (1995) indicates that Hjern's methodology (cf. Hjern & Hull, 1982b; Hjern & Porter, 1981; Hjern, 1982) relied on perceptions. The consequence is that it is not possible to record the indirect effects (sometimes unconscious effects) on the actors. The second is a normative criticism; that the model assumes policy control is exercised with power from principal actors. However, many studies have shown agents treating the goals of their principals as being of lesser importance than their own personal objectives (March & Simon, 1958; Matland, 1995). To further highlight the differences between the approaches, Table 3.2 contrasts the characteristics of top-down and bottom-up.

Table 3.2 Comparison between top-down and bottom-up approaches

Characteristics	Top-Down (e.g. Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1980)	Bottom-up (e.g. Hjern & Hull, 1982b)
Initial focus	(Central) Government decision, e.g. new pollution control law, increase sport participation	Local implementation structure (network) involved in a policy area, e.g. pollution control from bottom (government and private)
Identification of major actors in the process	From top-down and from government out to private sector (although importance attached to causal theory also calls for accurate understanding of target group's incentive structure)	up, service providers such as sport club volunteers
Evaluative criteria	Focus on extent of attainment of formal objectives (carefully analysed). May look at other politically significant criteria and unintended consequences, but these are optional.	Much less clear. Basically anything the analyst chooses which is somehow relevant to the policy issue or problem. Certainly does not require any careful analysis of official government decision(s).
Overall focus	How does one steer system to achieve (top) policy-maker's intended policy results?	Strategic interaction among multiple actors in a policy network.
Implementation strategy	Leadership and control that comes from government to direct the strategies.	Street level actors negotiating and bargaining to cope with policy change.

Source: Adapted from Sabatier (1986)

DeLeon and DeLeon (2002) concluded that top-down policy implementation is disposed to hierarchical, overly optimistic expectations that, when faced with complexity, the likelihood was that the goals would not be achieved. Whereas, bottom-up policy implementation tended to be more realistic and practical, in that it suggested that the opinions of the majority had a considerable impact on (and how they choose to arrive at) the goals.

To help conceptualise the two contrasting approaches within a sporting context, the following passage from Skille's (2009) reflective essay on policy-making and implementation for a sports programme in Norway is useful:

The implementation of the Sports City Programme (SCP) [comparable to many Government initiatives aiming to increase sport participation in the UK] is based on a contract between the government and the private/voluntary body... to provide a specific public service. 'Private bodies' are often represented as simply a mechanism for policy implementation, with policy making still in the government's hands. However, as is visible in the case of the SCP, the line between policy-making and implementation is not easily drawn. Action frequently takes place almost without guidelines from the decision-makers. The practice of the 'street-level bureaucrats', in this case mostly volunteers in sports clubs, is far from being under control of the public [Department of Sports Policy] DSP. It is therefore important to balance the decisional top-down perspective on policy with an action-oriented bottom-up perspective (p. 9).

Although this example is given in a Norwegian context, it is informative in highlighting the often unclear, permeable boundaries that separate policy-making from implementation. Skille (2009) additionally advocates consideration of using both top-down and bottom-up approaches for implementation research. In support of this O'Toole Jr. (2000) noted that the sterile top-down versus bottom-up debates have ended as scholars have recognised that both approaches have individual strengths. This has led a number of scholars to attempt to produce hybrid models combining attributes of top-down and bottom-up perspectives.

3.5.5 Synthesis of the two approaches

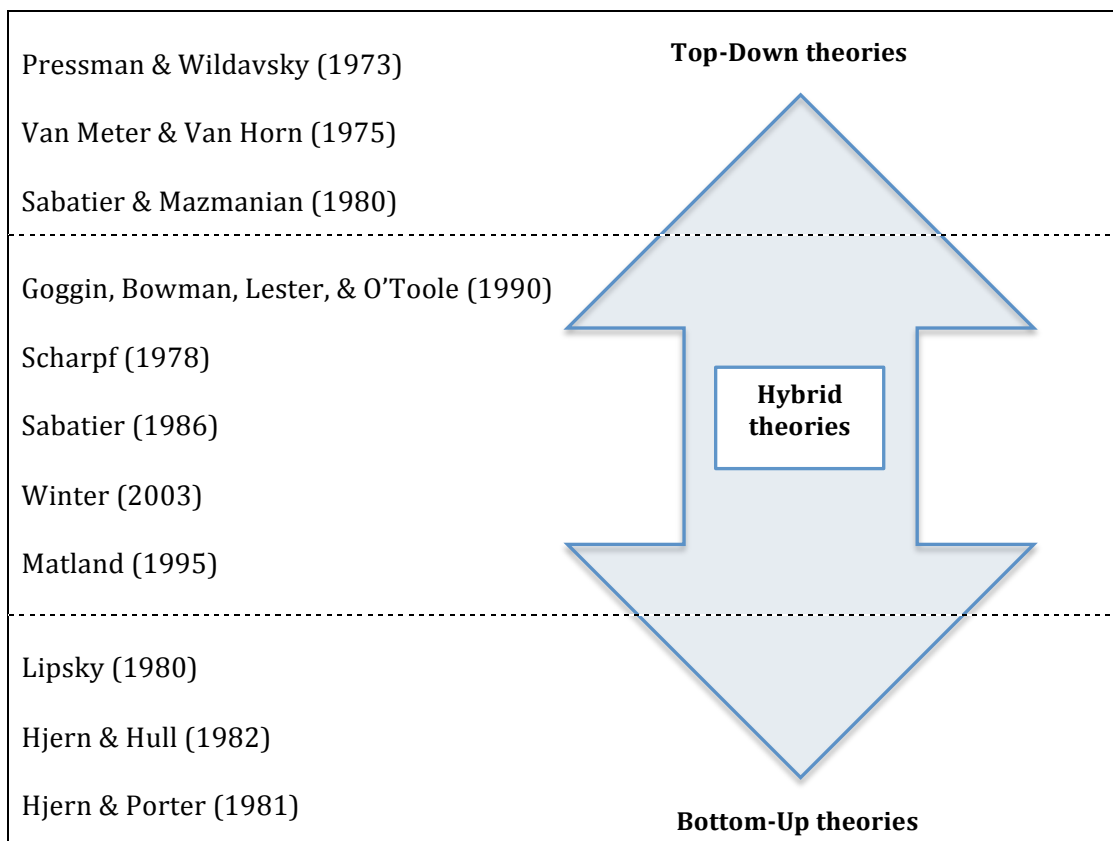
A number of scholars today believe that a synthesis of the main approaches offers the fullest and most valid position to understanding implementation of policy (Matland, 1995; O'Toole Jr., 2004). A forward and backward mapping model designed by Elmore (1985) was an early attempt at combining the two approaches. Goggin et al. (1990) proposed a

'third generation' of implementation research that they stated would be more 'scientific' in its approach than the two previous generations. They presented three groups of variables (using elements of the two major approaches) that are understood to affect implementation:

1. Incentives and restrictions from the top (federal level)
2. Incentives and restrictions from the bottom (state and local levels)
3. State-specific factors defined as decisional outcomes and state capacity (Matland, 1995).

The authors found that communications between the different levels were often distorted or misinterpreted. Few authors, however, have continued to develop this third generation empirical research (O'Toole Jr., 2000). The route a number of academics have chosen to follow is to review the two schools of thought and attempt to synthesise the literature (e.g. Hill & Hupe, 2009; Matland, 1995; Sabatier, 1986). In fact, Sabatier (Sabatier & Pelkey, 1987; Sabatier, 1986, 1999) distanced himself from the top-down perspective he helped to develop in the early 1980s and has since moved toward developing a combined perspective.

Matland (1995) observed that the original top-down models took an administrative view of what is fundamentally a political problem, therefore, failing to identify the sources of implementation barriers, i.e. making an over simplistic distinction between policy and implementation. Most recent top-down models (developed in part as a response to the early criticisms) such as Matland's model began to foreground political factors. Matland continues his critique of each approach suggesting the bottom-up argument, that policies are decided at the micro level, fails because it 'does not take account of the considerable forces and power that can be brought to bear upon an issue when it is unambiguously and explicitly formulated' (p. 165). Most reviewers agree that some convergence of the two theoretical perspectives, merging the macro level variables of the top-down models to the micro level variables bottom-up theorists consider, is necessary for the field to develop (Matland, 1995). Figure 3.3 identifies the key authors from the two contrasting approaches, and a number of scholars who have attempted to develop hybrid theories.



Source: adapted from Pülzl & Treib (2007)

Figure 3.3 Top-down, bottom-up and hybrid theories with key contributors

Pülzl and Treib (2007) summarised the two ways that they considered hybrid theorists to have progressed implementation theory. Firstly, hybrid theorists have embraced the perspectives of top-down and bottom-up rather than enter the debate between the two contrasting theories and focus on empirical arguments. Secondly, hybrid theorists have raised important factors for consideration that had previously received minimal attention such as Winter (2003) noting that the policy formulation process must be considered when analysing implementation and Sabatier (1986) recommending that the four to six year time frame for the study of implementation would miss critical features of public policy-making. Thus, a 10 – 20 year period combining the best aspects from top-down and bottom-up would produce an improved understanding of implementation. However, synthesising the two approaches must be treated with caution due to the different fundamental assumptions (DeLeon, 1999). A key contribution to hybrid theory was made by Matland (1995), which will now be introduced and discussed in detail.

3.5.5.1 Ambiguity-Conflict matrix

Matland (1995) presented a synthesis of the two approaches that he argued would be the most fruitful by explaining when which of the two models would be the more appropriate to employ rather than to develop a model combining both simultaneously. Setting out his rationale, Matland noted that many of the previous implementation studies presented long lists of variables that may have affected the implementation process. However, he argues the conditions under which the variables were important had often been ignored or received minimal attention. He continued his argument recommending that instead of selecting ten variables from both the top-down and bottom up approaches, which he sees would exacerbate the problem; Matland concentrated a smaller number of variables to examine their theoretical propositions in greater detail by developing a matrix, which he termed it the 'Ambiguity-Conflict matrix'.

Matland noted that top-down theorists generally study relatively clear policies, whereas bottom-up theorists, in general, focus attention on policies with greater inherent uncertainty. He goes on to suggest that this difference has two features: ambiguity and conflict. In addition, he suggests that developing a more effective model of implementation requires evaluation of these two policy characteristics. Policy conflict exists when more than one stakeholder views a policy as directly relevant to its interests and when these stakeholders have incompatible interpretations. These differences can arise regarding either the assumed goals of a policy or the implementation schedule and activities. Policy ambiguity can refer to ambiguity of goals and the processes involved in implementing policy. For example, in top-down models, goal clarity is a key factor that directly shapes policy success but when there are uncertainties about the specific roles various actors will play in the implementation process, ambiguity can occur. However, one of the ways to limit conflict is through ambiguity (Hudson, 2006).

Matland expanded these two concepts and proposed the Ambiguity–Conflict matrix. Each quadrant indicates the type of implementation process and the central principles determining outcomes for this type of implementation. Matland (1995) emphasises the point that:

Ambiguity and conflict are presented as dichotomous; this is strictly to simplify the exposition. The theoretical constructs are continuous. As a policy gradually moves across a dimension, for example from low to high conflict, the implementation process is expected increasingly to show the characteristics of the paradigm being moved toward and decreasingly to show the characteristics of the paradigm being moved away from. There is

no tipping point at which a slight move up or down causes a radical shift from one type of implementation to another. (p. 159)

Each quadrant represents a different type of implementation process:

- **Administrative Implementation** (low policy ambiguity and low policy conflict)
 - The desired outcome is virtually assured providing sufficient resources are available. Low levels of ambiguity mean goals are clear and actors understand their responsibilities. Orders are perceived as legitimate meaning likelihood of resistance is minimal. Relatively closed to outside influence.
- **Political Implementation** (low policy ambiguity and high policy conflict)
 - Clearly defined goals that are incompatible, which cause disputes. Implementation outcomes are decided by power. Low ambiguity insures that monitoring of compliance is fairly easy.
- **Experimental Implementation** (high policy ambiguity and low policy conflict)
 - Outcomes will primarily depend on which actors are active and most involved and on the contextual conditions for the process. This implementation condition closely corresponds to a 'garbage can' process with streams of actors, problems, solutions, and choice combinations to produce unpredictable outcomes. Variation (of actors, and their perceptions of the process) across policy settings causes ambiguity. Open more to environmental influences. Goals agreed upon and known but means of achieving them are unknown.
- **Symbolic Implementation** (high policy ambiguity and high policy conflict)
 - The inherent ambiguity leads to numerous interpretations and debate over whose interpretation is right. Similar to political implementation but local level coalition strength determines the outcome rather than at a macro level.

For achieving implementation compliance from an actor, Matland draws upon Etzioni's (1961) suggestion of three types of mechanisms: normative, coercive and remunerative. **Normative** mechanisms bring about compliance through legitimacy of the person requesting action or that both parties have mutual goals. **Coercive** mechanisms threaten sanctions against those failing to comply with requests for action. **Remunerative** mechanisms offer incentives, such as additional resources or funding, to make compliance more appealing.

Hudson (2006) adapted Matland's matrix to help describe some of the key features within each quadrant in greater detail. These interpretations are presented in Figure 3.4.

	Low Conflict Administrative Implementation	High Conflict Political Implementation
Low Ambiguity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● goals are given and a means for problem solving is known ● a central authority has the information, resources and sanction capability to enact the desired policy ● implementation is hierarchically ordered with each link receiving orders from the level above ● policy is spelled out explicitly at each level and there is agreement on responsibilities and tasks ● relatively uniform outcomes at the micro-level across many sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● there is conflict over both goals and means ● the implementation process is a key arena for conflict ● implementation outcomes are determined by the distribution of power ● compliance is not automatically forthcoming ● low ambiguity ensures that monitoring of compliance is relatively easy
High Ambiguity	<p>Experimental Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● outcomes depend largely on which actors are involved ● variation in outcomes from site to site ● outcomes are hard to predict ● opportunities for local entrepreneurs to create local policies ● compliance monitoring mechanisms are of limited relevance ● the policy may become a low priority 	<p>Symbolic Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ostensibly implausible combination ● salient symbols can produce high levels of conflict even when the policy is vague ● outcomes will vary across sites ● outcomes will depend upon the balance of local coalition strength ● policy ambiguity makes it difficult to monitor activities

Source: Hudson's (2006) adaptation of Matland's Ambiguity-Conflict matrix

Figure 3.4 Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict matrix

In the case of this research Matland's Ambiguity-Conflict matrix emerges as valuable for helping to explain any potential variation of policy implementation relating to the roles (past and present) of each National Governing Body and sport clubs during the policy process. In Matland's (1995) concluding remarks in his literature review of policy implementation synthesis approaches he prescribes that, in some cases, it is most suitable to adopt either a top-down or bottom-up approach. However, it is important to recognise that both perspectives contain elements of insight relevant in any implementation situation.

To this end, this section has introduced the two contrasting theoretical perspectives for policy implementation analysis and presented attempts at synthesis, showcasing Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict matrix. With the top-down approach, it is clearly

concerned about 'power to control'. Many top-down theorists (e.g. Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973) have made attempts to define how hierarchical power can be achieved effectively and efficiently. Significant power associated with policy implementation can also be found at the grassroots street-level when direction can often be open to the interpretation of policy implementers; hence, it is important to discuss this key concept of power in further detail.

3.6 Discussion

This chapter has reviewed the two contrasting approaches for policy implementation analysis and the more recent synthesis models. In addition, the various conceptualisations of power and meso-level policy analysis frameworks have been assessed to determine the most appropriate theories to guide the empirical research.

Given the fact that this study will conduct interviews with a central policy-maker (Sport England), various National Governing Bodies and club volunteers and members across the three sports it would be pertinent to provide perspectives of implementation at all levels. Therefore, with *Clubmark* (the primary policy) originating from Sport England a top-down analysis approach would be a suitable starting point. Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) model recommended that perfect implementation is unattainable but if the 10 preconditions they advised could be satisfied, then perfect implementation can be achieved. This model seems to provide an ideal starting point for examining the strategies of Sport England and the National Governing Bodies adopt when attempting implementation of policy.

Then, owing to the fact that the club contexts, within (and across) each of the three case study sports, are likely to range considerably it will be important to identify the implementation processes that the volunteers experience. Consequently, a bottom-up analysis approach would be useful. Lipsky (1980) suggesting that the decisions of street level bureaucrats (that is, the low level policy actors, such as VSC volunteers), their routines they establish, and the ways they cope with pressures (such as time) effectively become the policies they are implementing, which the central policy-makers have little (if any) control over seems a fitting approach to apply.

In addition, as highlighted by hybrid theorists in the literature, top-down and bottom-up approaches appear best suited at different times of the implementation process. A hybrid

model, such as Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict matrix, emerges as the most appropriate perspective to adopt, which would complement the top-down and bottom-up approaches selected for this study. Furthermore, to help organise and set a context for the understanding of implementation during analysis, particularly within the VSC environment, Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams framework will be adopted where appropriate. Having a greater appreciation of the actors involved in the process and the mood within the VSC contexts will allow for the most appropriate application of the theoretical framework to yield a rich data set.

The methodological considerations for the application of these theories in the empirical research will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

With the aim and objectives of this research established, it was then important to determine the philosophical position to be adopted for this study since that would affect how the data were collected and analysed. As Grix (2002, p. 176) argued, it is important to hold a 'clear and transparent knowledge of the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin research [which is] necessary in order: to understand the interrelationship of the key components of research (including methodology and methods); to avoid confusion when discussing theoretical debates and approaches to social phenomena; and to be able to recognise others', and defend our own, positions'. Therefore, this chapter outlines the research strategy and methods employed for the study. The chapter is organised as follows. Firstly, a discussion of the philosophical paradigms within social sciences (consisting of ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations), acknowledging that there are various philosophical orientations available to view the social world¹³. Next, the research design will be presented, and the methods used for data collection. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of issues of reliability and validity relevant for the research design.

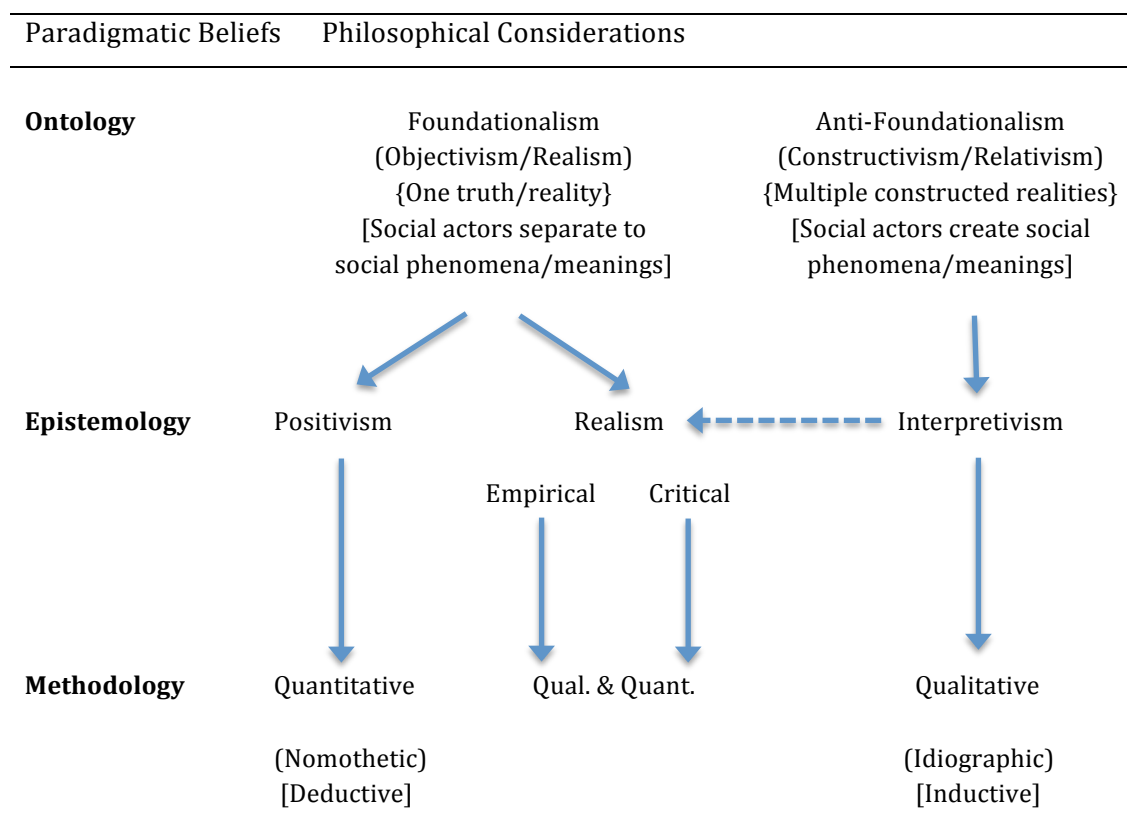
4.2 Philosophical considerations

Philosophical assumptions about social reality and the acquisition of knowledge are important as they shape, direct and underpin the research process. Contained within philosophical considerations are research paradigms (cf. Kuhn, 2012), which reflect our thought patterns or basic beliefs that 'represents a *worldview* that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107). Thomas (2009, p. 77) describes paradigms as 'positions on the best ways to think about and study the social world'. A choice of paradigm influences what is considered to be an appropriate subject for research, the nature of the research questions, the type of data to be collected and how theories are drawn upon and analysed.

¹³ The intention of the discussion is to briefly introduce the key assumptions of the diverse philosophical positions available for a researcher to adopt when undertaking a study. It is not appropriate to provide a detailed analysis of each and every position. For comprehensive explanations refer to Bryman (2008) or Grix (2002).

Encompassed within the main paradigmatic beliefs (that define the nature of enquiry), the theoretical assumptions consist of: ontology, which questions the nature of reality (the way we think the world is), epistemology (the relationship between the researcher and what we think can be known) and, methodology (how knowledge of the world can be investigated). The relationship between the three philosophical theoretical assumptions is displayed in Table 4.1. These will now be discussed in greater detail.

Table 4.1 The relationship between ontology, epistemology and methodology



Source: Adapted from Furlong & Marsh (2010)

4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is the foundation of all research, which is a theory of 'being' that questions whether there is a 'real' world 'out there', independent of our knowledge (Furlong & Marsh, 2010). Simplistically, ontology describes the way one views reality or truth. Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner (2006) maintain that ontological assumptions are the notions that underpin theories about what kind of entities can exist. According to Blaikie 'ontological claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units

interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality' (Blaikie, 2000, p. 8). There are two principal contrasting ontological positions:

- Foundationalism, which is often referred to as objectivism or realism, 'asserts that social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is *independent* of social actors' (Bryman, 2008, p. 696, emphasis added). In other words, researchers supporting this position believe social phenomena are separate from themselves and must be directly observable (Grix, 2002).
- Anti-foundationalism (often referred to as constructivism or relativism) on the other hand, is an ontological position that 'asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being *accomplished* by social actors' (Bryman, 2008, p. 692, emphasis added). That is, 'beliefs, theories or values are claimed to be relative to the age or society that produced them' (Abercrombie et al., 2006, p. 326) and that social phenomena and categories are in a constant state of revision (Grix, 2002) through the perceptions and actions of social actors.

Grix (2002) highlights the importance of a researcher's selection between the two distinct positions, offering a practical example for the study of social capital: a foundationalist ontology would allow for a positivist epistemology, which would then lead to a choice of quantitative methodological strategies (using a large number of subjects) that would utilise questionnaire or survey methods that would yield questionnaire/survey data sources to analyse; conversely, anti-foundationalist ontology would allow for an interpretivist epistemology, which would then lead to (mainly) a qualitative methodological strategy (usually using a small number of in-depth case studies) utilising interviews which would then yield interview transcription sources for analysis.

Consequently, a researcher's ontological position will affect the manner in which a study is conducted. Hence, 'the way we think the world is (ontology) influences what we think can be known about it (epistemology)' (Fleetwood, 2005, p. 197).

4.2.2 Epistemology

In philosophy epistemology is quite simply 'a theory of knowledge'. The concept is 'the theory of how it is that people come to have knowledge of the external world' (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2006, p. 133). Blaikie (2000, p. 8) offers the definition that 'an epistemology consists of ideas about what can count as knowledge, what can be

known, and what criteria such knowledge must satisfy in order to be called knowledge rather than beliefs'. There are a number of epistemological positions that could be adopted for scientific research studies. For example, two main contrasting positions are positivist and interpretivist perspectives. The distinct position adopted by the researcher would lead to a different methodology employed and also different interpretations of the same social phenomena (Grix, 2002) as demonstrated in the previous example. In fact, within social sciences, a fundamental concern is a question of whether the social world can and should be studied following the same principles and procedures as the natural sciences (Bryman, 2008). The position that advocates the importance of replicating the natural sciences corresponds with an epistemological position known as positivism.

4.2.2.1 Positivism

Positivism assumes that the researcher and the research subject are independent of each other. For many years positivism has been the standard philosophical approach of natural science (C. Robson, 2011). Traditionally, positivism was a popular epistemological position for many researchers studying social reality as it enabled the application of the natural science methods (Bryman, 2008). Abercrombie et al. (2006, p. 299) proposed that this philosophical approach could be characterised 'mainly by the insistence that science can only deal with observable entities known directly to experience and is opposed to metaphysical speculation without concrete evidence'. Principally, positivists attempt to construct generalisable theories that express relationships between experimental results and hypothesise.

Rowntree (2001) and Durkheim (1951 [1997]) are examples of seminal studies from the social sciences that advocated the use of a positivist approach. However, positivist approaches in social sciences face ever-increasing criticisms. Rowntree conducted an investigation of poverty in York, England using extensive survey data. The work has received criticisms in regard to the interpretation of facts with it being a positivist study. As cited in Bulmer and Bales (1991, p. 91), Bosanquet published a pamphlet (undated) attacking the poverty line research suggesting that it represented 'no statistical evidence at all, but is merely a summary of impressions'. Durkheim adopted a positivist approach in his study of suicide. Stark and Bainbridge (1996, p. 32) provide criticism of Durkheim's work suggesting that firstly, the majority of data was that of previous research and secondly, the findings are based on aggregated data. Van Poppel and Day (1996) offered a more significant criticism of Durkheim's work suggesting that the causes of death were

interpreted differently depending on whether the subject was Protestant or Catholic. Hence, suicides were not categorised in the same manner, which raised doubts of issues of reliability and validity.

Marsh et al. (1999) affirm that most of the British politics literature on the postwar period adopts an implicit positivist positioning as a result of most authors not acknowledging their epistemological orientation. By not stating the epistemological position, they suggest it becomes difficult for an analyst to understand and defend their findings.

4.2.2.2 Post-positivism

Post-positivists are a group of theorists who share some, but not all, a range of views accepting that the background, knowledge and values of the researcher can influence what is observed and how it is understood. However, like positivists, post-positivists seek objectivity which they approach by recognising the possible effects of likely biases (C. Robson, 2011). For example, in Frank Fischer's (1998) review of mainstream policy inquiry, he advocated a post-positivist epistemological perspective and offered an improved description of what social scientists actually did in practice (in comparison with neopositivism) by situating empirical inquiry in a broader interpretive framework.

With the demise and weight of criticism of logical positivism (a variant of neopositivism) in the second half of the twentieth century, sociologists began to perceive realism (in contrast to logical positivism) as a more satisfactory formulation for the methods that they employed (Baert, 2005). This resulted in the realist philosophical position receiving increased attention.

4.2.2.3 Realism

Roy Bhaskar, (2011, p. 2) considers that realism 'provides a set of perspectives on society (and nature) and how to understand them...[that] helps to guide, empirically controlled investigations into the structures generating social phenomena'. Phillips (1987, p. 205) defines realism, in general, as 'the view that entities exist independently of being perceived, or independently of our theories about them'. In other words, realism shares the belief with positivism that there is a reality that exists, which is separate from our descriptions of it. Within this epistemological position, there are two forms of realism:

4.2.2.3.1 Empirical realism

Empirical realism suggests reality can be understood, given that appropriate methods are employed. The assumption by realists is that there is a perfect link between reality and the term to describe it (Bryman, 2008, p. 14). Empirical realism draws upon positivism and deductivism (subsequently discussed in the Research design section), and which 'emphasises the understanding of causes through law-like expressions of co-varying empirical events for a given unit of analysis' (Downward, 2005, p. 317). However, (Bhaskar, 1989, p. 2) argued that this position 'fails to recognise that there are enduring structures and generative mechanisms underlying and producing observable phenomena and events' and is therefore 'superficial'.

4.2.2.3.2 Critical realism

Critical realism is a paradigm (frequently associated with the work of Roy Bhaskar (1989, 2011) where its position is that opposing logical positivist, relativist, and anti-foundational epistemologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). If positivism was at one extreme of a continuum and interpretivism was at the other extreme, the critical realist perspective would be located in the centre drawing on research components from the two contrasting perspectives.

A critical realist primarily argues that a scientist's conceptualisation of reality is simply a way of knowing that reality and assumes there is no possibility of attaining a single, "correct" understanding of the world that is independent of any particular viewpoint (Maxwell, 2012). That is, reality is perceived as a structured open system whereby the natural world consists of a range of varied systems, each with their own distinct mechanisms (Houston, 2001). This assumption contrasts with a positivist's closed system view that their conceptualisation of reality actually reflects that reality.

Critical realism is 'critical' due to the fact that 'the explanation of social phenomena entails that we critically evaluate them. Moreover, criticism cannot reasonably be limited to false ideas, abstracted from the practical contexts in which they are constitutive, but 'must extend to critical evaluation of their associated practices and the material structures which they produce and which in turn help to sustain those practices' (Sayer, 1992, p. 40). Bryman's (2008, p. 14) definition describes critical realism as:

a specific form of realism whose manifesto is to recognise the reality of the natural order and the events and discourses of the social world and holds that 'we will only be able to

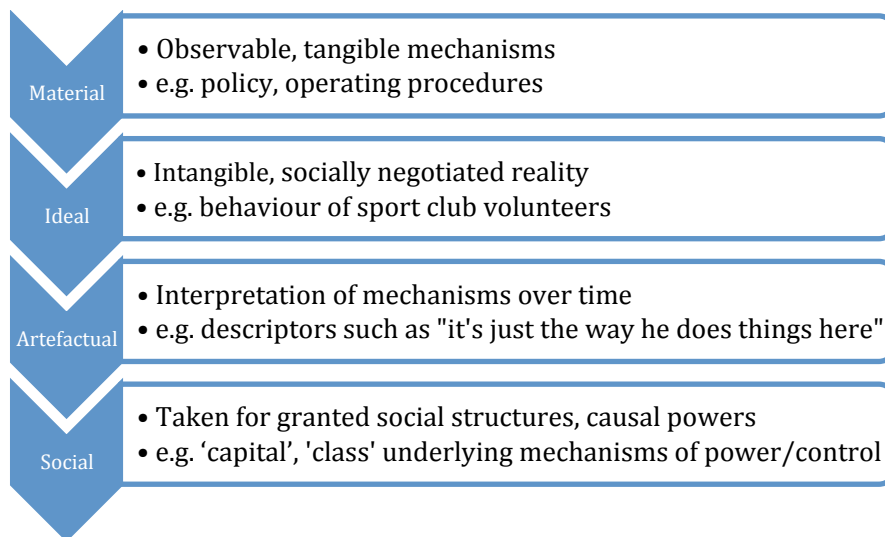
understand – and so change – the social if we identify the structures at work that generate those events and discourses’ (Bhaskar, 1989, p. 2).

These two definitions underline the apparent significance of structures for the critical realist philosophical paradigm (structure and agency will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter). A critical realist asserts that these important (often underlying) structures (that generate that world) are not always immediately recognisable through direct observation; practical and theoretical social science techniques need be applied to identify them (Bhaskar, 1989, 2011; Bryman, 2008). It is this causal level, embracing the structures (and mechanisms within) which generate events, that is central to Bhaskar’s theorising. Houston (2001) provides a good example to explain this point by relating the assumption to magnetism experiments that use iron filings. The empirical level will be satisfied once we can observe the iron filings arrange into an identifiable pattern. However, in order to provide a satisfactory explanation of why this phenomenon occurs, we must accept that there must be some unseen causal mechanism in operation. In this case, the underlying mechanism is magnetism (p. 850).

Thereby, ‘unlike a positivist epistemology, critical realism accepts that the structures that are identified may not be amenable to the senses. Thus, whereas positivism is empiricist [only knowledge gained through experiences and the senses constitutes reality], critical realism is not’ (Bryman, 2008, p. 692-693). According to Maxwell (2012, p. 5), critical realists ‘retain an ontological realism (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories, and constructions) while accepting a form of epistemological constructivism and relativism (our understanding of this world is inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoint)’. Consequently, critical realism combines ontological realism with epistemological fallibility (Downward, 2005).

One distinctive feature of critical realism is that multiple realities exist for all phenomena under investigation. That is, the social (or political) world consists of four levels of reality: material, ideal, artefactual and social (see Figure 4.1). Byers (2013) notes the different levels of reality correspond to the depth of reality being considered. The levels range from the superficial material reality to the deeply embedded social reality. The critical realist perspective suggests that accurate understanding of a phenomenon can only be obtained through considering all levels of reality. Fleetwood (2005, p. 200-201) explains these four modes of reality in greater detail:

- The term 'materially real' allows us to handle entities that do exist independently of what we do, say or think.
- The term 'ideally real' refers to conceptual entities such as discourse, language, genres, tropes, styles, signs, symbols and semiotised entities, ideas, beliefs, meanings, understandings, explanations, opinions, concepts, representations, models, theories and so on. Fleetwood (2005) refers to entities such as these as discourse or discursive entities.
- The term 'artefactually real' refers to entities such as cosmetics and computers. Computers are a synthesis of the physically, ideally and socially real. Because entities are conceptually mediated, we interpret them in various, and often diverse, ways. Violins may be interpreted as musical instruments or as table tennis bats. But, unless we are prepared to accept that any interpretation (and, therefore, subsequent action) is as good as another, that interpreting a violin as a table tennis bat is as good as interpreting it is a musical instrument, then we have to accept that there are limits to interpretation.
- The term 'socially real' refers to practices, states of affairs or entities for short, such as caring for children, becoming unemployed, the market mechanism, or social structures in general, especially the social structures that constitute organizations. Critical realists use the term 'social structures' as a general-purpose term to refer to configurations of causal mechanisms, rules, resources, relations, powers, positions and practices.



Source: Adapted from Tsoukas (1994) and Byers (2013)

Figure 4.1 Levels of reality according to critical realism

Furthermore, Marsh et al. (1999) offered six assumptions of critical realism:

1. There is a reality external to individuals
2. Reality consists of superficial and deep structures (limited by one's background and education)
3. Objects and structures have causal power
4. Actors' discursive knowledge regarding 'reality' has a construction effect on the outcomes of social interrelations
5. Structures (such as cultures, ideologies, and institutional practices) enable and constrain everyday social activities rather than determine outcomes
6. Social science involves the study of reflexive agents who may construct, deconstruct and reconstruct structures

Downward (2005) suggested that the role of theory in realism is to contextualise observable behaviour by using theory to understand the underlying structures of a particular social and political situation. Consequently, theory helps to identify and explain the underlying structural relationships in policy networks/communities and advocacy coalitions, for example. Moreover, social structure and agency are both a condition for and a consequence of the other. An understanding cannot be obtained through agents alone. Actors constantly draw on social structures in order to act and in acting they either reproduce or transform those structures.

With regard to the nature of this study, an important point to note is that a number of authors have incorporated elements of critical realism's assumptions in relation to policy analysis. For example, Downward (2005), Marsh et al. (1999) and Marsh and Smith (2001) have all identified the ontological and epistemological assumptions associated with critical realism as a useful way to progress analysing policy processes. It is worth reiterating that critical realism is a meta-theory, which can operate within a stratified area of ontological and epistemological paradigmatic levels. For instance, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain that critical realism shares a positivist's premise that "there is a world of events out there that is observable and independent of human consciousness" yet simultaneously accepts that "knowledge about this world is socially constructed" (p. 13). Therefore, this unique, stratified reality (or ontological) positioning rejects the corresponding theory of truth; preferring to understand that reality is arranged in different levels (as previously discussed, see figure 4.1).

4.2.2.4 Interpretivism

A final epistemological position to be considered is interpretivism, which was referred to earlier. This position holds an opposing viewpoint to positivism (see Table 4.2), whereby the social scientist is required to comprehend the subjective meaning of social (or political) action, not be disconnected from the phenomena. Interpretivists consider research subjects (humans and their institutions) to be fundamentally distinct from the subjects in the natural sciences and therefore require a research strategy that respects those differences (Bryman, 2008). In a sport policy example, Green (2006) employed an interpretivist approach in his study of explaining how funding and political justifications for certain sport policies shifted in the United Kingdom. Green systematically reviewed documentation (academic literature, government departments and NGBs) and conducted semi-structured interviews.

Table 4.2 Paradigms: positivism and interpretivism

	Positivist	Interpretivist
The researcher aims to ...	predict and explain, usually generalising from carefully selected samples	understand the particular, contributing to building a framework of 'multiple realities'
The researcher uses (for example) ...	survey, experiment, structured observation	unstructured observation, case study, unstructured interview, participant observation
The researcher aims to be ...	independent, an outsider	an insider, interacting with participants
The researcher looks at ...	things that can be quantified and counted	perceptions, feelings, ideas, thoughts, actions as heard or observed
The researcher analyses ...	variables, decided on in advance of fieldwork	emergent patterns
The design of the research is ...	fixed	flexible
Other words sometimes used (often inaccurately) to sum up these approaches ...	scientific, quantitative, nomothetic	naturalistic, qualitative, idiographic

Source (Thomas, 2009)

Now that a number of the key epistemological positions which can be adopted for scientific research have been introduced, it is now appropriate to introduce the next logical phase of the research design process: the methodology.

4.3 Methodology

For Grix (2002, p. 179) 'a researcher's methodological approach, underpinned by and reflecting specific ontological and epistemological assumptions, represents a choice of approach and research methods adopted in a given study. Methodology is concerned with the logic of scientific inquiry; in particular with investigating the potentialities and limitations of particular techniques or procedures'. Likewise, Cairney (2012, p. 46) considers that 'methodology is the analysis of methods used to gather knowledge (based on epistemology, or what knowledge is and how it is created)'. There are two distinct methodological positions adopted in order to understand the political and social world:

- *Nomothetic* research methodology is based upon systematic procedures and technique by applying and developing theoretical causal models or statements underpinned by positivist assumptions. This approach utilises 'hard data' such as government statistics, election results and questionnaire facts rather than 'soft data' such as interviews and participant observation (Furlong & Marsh, 2010), which allows advocates to present generalisable explanations or predications. According to the nomothetic approach, if two events occur in sequence regularly then one is said to explain the other (Easton, 2010). However, Easton argues 'this simple and elegant formulation has any number of problems which makes its use in any research situation problematic. The most crucial problem is that constant conjunction of elements or variables is not a causal explanation or indeed an explanation of any kind. It is simply an atheoretical statement about the world. It doesn't answer the question why?' (p. 118).
- In contrast, more subjectivist approaches to social science (within interpretive and realism paradigms) follow *idiographic* methodology, which stresses the importance of letting one's subject unfold its nature and characteristics during the process of investigation resulting in a more flexible process (Cox & Hassard, 2005). Effectively, proponents of an idiographic methodology advocate that 'social science should describe empirical reality in all its complexity and diversity' (Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen, & Karlsson, 2001, p. 3) and not attempt to follow the pattern of the natural sciences. Therefore, qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, documentation and participant observations are utilised for this approach (cf. Furlong & Marsh, 2010). However, often it is not clear in the interpretivist idiographic approach the standards by which one interpretation is judged to be better than another (Easton, 2010).

In accordance with the critical realist assumptions it is crucial to account for the importance of structure(s), whether that be relationships between observable social phenomena or the equally significant unobservable relationships that can only be

established indirectly 'inferred from the researcher' (cf. Marsh & Smith, 2001, p. 531). The structure (and agency) issues are discussed in more detail below.

Critical realism proposes a unique relationship between structures and agents when seeking to understand multiple realities that requires examination of both structures and agents in an attempt to understand social phenomena. Structures are the 'relatively enduring institutionalized relationships between social positions and practices located at different levels of analysis that constrain actors capacities to 'make a difference'' (Reed, 1997, p. 25). Agents produce and reproduce the structures, which constrain and enable their action. However, 'agents are not without power to resist pressures from the structures they created and therefore the psychological dimension of agent action has been the predominant focus of organisation studies attempting to understand the behaviour of agents' (Byers, 2013, p. 11). Thus agents located within a social-political context (Marsh et al., 1999), interpret their surroundings and in turn, these interpretations influence their behaviour.

Therefore, policy outcomes, for example, cannot be explained only with reference to structures; they are also the result of powerful agents. This is termed a dialectical relationship. In order to gain a better understanding of the implementation process of public policy relating to sport clubs, Marsh & Smith's (2001) three dialectical relationships from their policy networks study will be utilised. The dialectical relationships are between structure and agency; subsystem and context; and subsystem and outcome (cf. Marsh & Smith 2001, p. 5). Therefore, 'a theoretical framework makes it possible to acknowledge both the influence of actors on the development of policies in subsystems and the impact of the structural context in which actors operate' (Green, 2003). Accordingly, the most appropriate technique to yield data (that is the influence of actors and the impact of structural contexts on requirements for implementing public policy), ideographic methodology will be employed. Thus qualitative methods such as interviews and document analysis (e.g. Furlong & Marsh, 2010) best suit this methodological approach. Qualitative research attempts to understand how social (and political) experience is created and given meaning. The researchers focus on the socially constructed nature of reality emphasising the relationship between themselves and what is studied, taking the situational constraints into consideration. Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.3) define qualitative research as:

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices

transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self...This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research usually focuses attention on words for the collection and analysis of data (rather than quantification) and employs a research strategy that usually has a combination of inductivist, constructionist, and interpretivist characteristics (Bryman, 2008). Within the qualitative paradigm, critical realists conceive the role of theory in social science research to be a dominant discourse used to establish social relationships in observation and interpretation. Table 4.3 summarises the strengths and weaknesses of employing a qualitative approach.

Table 4.3 Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Research

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The data are based on the participants' own categories of meaning. - It is useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth. - It is useful for describing complex phenomena. - Provides individual case information. - Can conduct cross-case comparisons and analysis. - Provides understanding and description of people's personal experiences of phenomena (i.e., the "emic" or insider's viewpoint). - Can describe, in rich detail, phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts. -The researcher identifies contextual and setting factors as they relate to the phenomenon of interest. - The researcher can study dynamic processes (i.e., documenting sequential patterns and change). - Can determine how participants interpret 'constructs' - Data are usually collected in naturalistic settings in qualitative research. - Qualitative approaches are responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders' needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge produced may not generalise to other people or other settings - It is difficult to make quantitative predictions. - It is more difficult to test hypotheses and theories. - It may have lower credibility with some administrators and commissioners of programs. - It generally takes more time to collect the data when compared to quantitative research. - Data analysis is often time consuming. - The results are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies.

Source: (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004)

In contrast to qualitative research, quantitative studies focus on measurement and analysis of relationships between variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The research strategy is deductivist and objectivist and includes a natural science model of the research process and is influenced by positivism (Bryman, 2008). Quantitative purists assert that the observer is separate from the entities that are subject to observation, maintaining that social science inquiry should be objective. Generalisations are desirable and possible, and real causes of social scientific outcomes can be determined reliably and validly. According to this school of thought, 'researchers should eliminate their biases, remain emotionally detached and uninvolved with the objects of study, and test or empirically justify their stated hypotheses' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14).

For this study, the most appropriate approach would be to utilise qualitative methods that would allow for complex descriptions of the implementation process and enable cross-case study comparisons. Since the qualitative approach is the preference for this study, the research strategy and techniques for collecting data will now be discussed.

4.4 Research design

The two main research strategies that link theory and research include *deductive* reasoning (beginning with general statements/theory and progressing to specific statements/findings i.e. theory guides research) and *inductive* reasoning (beginning with specific statements/findings progressing to general statements/theory. That is theory is an outcome of research). In the context of social research, the strategies would be either generalising from specific cases, or testing general ideas against specific cases (Blaikie, 2007). Deductive reasoning would be most appropriate with nomothetic methodological approaches whereas inductive reasoning would be best suited with idiographic methodological approaches. This study draws on theoretical models to support identification and analysis of the roles NGBs and sports clubs perform in the policy implementation process. Hence, research followed deductive reasoning with a focus on two boxing clubs, two swimming clubs, and two rugby clubs using a case study strategy for each club and their respective NGBs as well as Sport England. The selection of these three sports were as follows:

- Swimming: continued as the most popular, highest participation sport in England¹⁴, the sport spans a wide age group, large NGB, and the sport is a compulsory part of national curriculum;
- Rugby union: large, 'powerhouse' (wealthy) NGB, the sport is played at schools, spans wide age group (similar to swimming);
- Boxing: a potentially contrasting case study due to predominant urban settings, often associated with a lower socio-economic demographic, and is a much smaller NGB; and
- The intention was to select sports which offered a range of differing contexts for the three policies: a) team and individual; b) different relationships between membership and participation development contexts; c) different socio-economic profiles; and d) differing contexts for engagement with young people.

4.4.1 Case studies

A 'case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence' (Robson, 2011, p. 136). This study adopts a case study research design recommended by Yin (2009). Yin identified six primary sources of evidence for case study research. Not all sources are necessary for a case study; however, employing multiple sources of data increases the reliability of the research. The possible sources of evidence include: documentation; archival records; interviews; direct observation; participant observation; and, physical artefacts. All sources are important so a case study should aim to use as many of the six as possible. Table 4.4 demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of each type:

¹⁴ <https://www.sportengland.org/research/who-plays-sport/by-sport/> (Accessed 08.10.16)

Table 4.4 Strengths and weaknesses of the various sources of data

Source of Evidence	Strengths	Weaknesses
Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stable - repeated review • unobtrusive - exist prior to case study • exact - names etc. • broad coverage - extended time span 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retrievability - difficult • biased selectivity • reporting bias - reflects author bias • access - may be blocked
Archival Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • precise and quantitative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • privacy might inhibit access
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted - focuses on case study topic • insightful - provides perceived causal inferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bias due to poor questions • response bias • incomplete recollection • reflexivity - interviewee expresses what interviewer wants to hear
Direct Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reality - covers events in real time • contextual - covers event context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time-consuming • selectivity - might miss facts • reflexivity - observer's presence might cause change • cost - observers need time
Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • insightful into interpersonal behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above • bias due to investigator's actions
Physical Artifacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • insightful into cultural features • insightful into technical operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selectivity • availability

Source: Yin (2008)

Although there are numerous strengths for adopting a case-study approach, it has still received criticism. Flyvbjerg (2006, 2011) notes, some of the major critiques (and ultimately misunderstandings) about case-study research is that it is easily attacked from a positivist perspective on account of its seemingly limited generalisability. Statistically speaking, it is difficult generalise on the basis of one or a few cases. However, Flyvbjerg highlights these major misunderstandings about the case study approach (such as the perceived requirement to produce generalisable data) and reveals useful for theory development, providing certain strategic criteria are met.

Now that the research strategy has been outlined, it is appropriate to provide a recap of the philosophical considerations introduced so far in this chapter, prior to discussing specific methods see Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Summary of the main distinctive research positions

	Naïve realism	Critical realism	Moderate constructionism	Naïve relativism
Ontology	Only one, true reality exists; universal truth claims apply	There is a reality; specific local, contingent truth claims apply	There may be a reality; specific local, contingent truth claims apply	There is no reality beyond subjects
Epistemology	It is possible to know exactly what this reality is through objective, empirical observations	It is possible to move closer to local truths through empirical observation, bounded by community-based critique/ consensus	It is possible to understand local truths through community-based knowledge creation and empirical observations bounded by subjectivity	It is possible to form an understanding of the subjective reality through analysis of the subject's account of knowledge
Methodology	Direct empirical observation	Empirical observations bounded by subjectivity and community-based critique/consensus	Community-based knowledge creation through empirical observations bounded by subjectivity	Analysis of knowledge structures and processes by observing texts
Research process	Deductive; theory testing	Abductive; theory generating and testing	Abductive; theory generating and testing	Inductive; theory generating

Source: Järvensivu & Törnroos (2010)

4.5 Methods

This section presents the specific methods to be adopted and the application of these methods. Methods, quite simply refer to the ‘procedures and activities for selecting, collecting, organising and analysing data’ (Blaikie, 2009, p. 8). Qualitative research inquiry has been selected for this study, which does not rely on numerical data as the unit of examination. Instead, the qualitative paradigm utilises techniques such as interviews and document analysis. Prior to gathering any data, the research proposal was submitted to the Loughborough University Ethics Approvals Sub-Committee to obtain approval.

4.5.1 Ethics

Once ethical approval was obtained, ethical assurance procedures were adhered to for the duration of this study. An ‘Informed Consent and Confidentiality’ form was presented to

each interviewee prior to every interview. The form was handed to the interviewee to read, sign and they were given the opportunity to ask questions to ensure they were fully aware of the nature of the study. Each interview was recorded on the digital voice recorder and the audio file was saved on to a laptop with a coded file name to protect the anonymity of the interviewees, ensuring no ethical implications. Further, all interviewees and participants were assigned pseudo names for the transcription and reference within the thesis.

4.5.2 Data collection

In accordance with Miles and Huberman's (1994) view of qualitative analysis, data should be continuously checked and analysed. Analysis is perceived to commence the moment the data collection period is initiated. During the period that data is collected, three themes of activity that exist are designated, illustrated in Figure 4.2. The first process Miles and Huberman suggest occurs continuously throughout any project and is termed 'data reduction'. This refers to 'the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appears in written-up field notes or transcriptions' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). The qualitative data can be reduced and simplified in a number of ways that includes summarising, defining patterns and even quantification.

The second process is termed 'data display'. Here, display is defined as 'an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action' (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11) where it is suggested that displays such as charts, matrices, graphs and networks lead to valid qualitative analysis and is more effective than using 'extended text'. Miles and Huberman argue that relying solely on quantities of text could lead the researcher to perceive certain information as important prematurely, or on the other hand, overlook important information in a large passage of text.

The final process recommended is 'conclusion drawing and verification'. From the outset of the data collection period, Miles and Huberman suggested that the researcher begins to decide what the data mean. A competent researcher will be able to keep an open mind and take time to finalise their conclusions. However, they argue that conclusions are only half of this important process. Verification is of equal significance that tests the credibility of the findings presented.

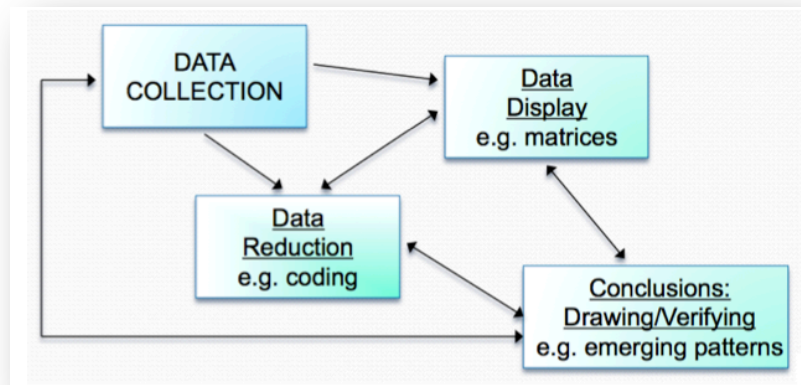


Figure 4.2 Components of data analysis: Interactive model, adapted from Miles & Huberman (1994)

In this study, one of the primary methods of the data collection phase was through conducting interviews with club members, NGB representatives and Sport England officials. This technique will now be discussed.

4.5.3 Interviews

A key feature of this study was gathering the subjective opinions, beliefs and experiences of both central policy-makers and actors at the point of delivery involved in the implementation process. An interview guide consisting of primary questions coupled with numerous open-ended questions was created subsequent to the review of the implementation literature. This type of interview framework allowed for a flexible interview process (Bryman & Bell, 2011), meaning it was possible for the overall structure and direction to vary between interviews enabling interviewees to freely discuss topics and offer their interpretation of situations. Saunders (2009) notes that an interviewer may change the sequence of questions or even add unanticipated questions that were not originally included when encountered with responses to what are seen as a significant replies, which may result in unexpected and insightful information coming to light, therefore enhancing the research findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The advantage of using semi-structured interviews allows the interviewer to divide the research topics and provide an interview guide which allows similar questions to be asked to each interviewee while still allowing the interviewee to talk at length on an issue and to provide their interpretation of topics. The semi-structured interview is 'based on an interview guide, open-ended questions and informal probing to facilitate a discussion of

issues' (Devine, 2002, p. 198). Once each interview was completed in this study, the audio recording from every interview was transcribed and then thematically coded.

4.5.3.1 Criteria for selection

The selection of interviewees was as follows: The first criterion was that the NGB officials required some knowledge of *Clubmark* and/or safeguarding. The aim was to gain perspectives from where the policy-makers were located (SE) through to the point of delivery (VSCs), including actors involved in the implementation process. Interviews were conducted with senior NGB officials, officers who supported clubs (predominantly the point of contact between NGBs and VSCs) and also one CSP officer (who was involved with *Clubmark* guidance in some sports). Then, the VSC members were required to have prior knowledge of *Clubmark*, safeguarding and the club's membership or participation strategies. The range of interviewees is listed in Appendix A.

4.5.3.2 Data coding

After producing the transcriptions from the recorded interviews, the strategy adopted to analyse the rich data was thematic analysis. Ayres (2008, p. 867) recommended that the main advantage of using this technique was that it 'facilitates the search for patterns of experience within a qualitative data set; the product of a thematic analysis is a description of those patterns and the overarching design that unites them'. The patterns of experience were considered useful in attempting to understand the roles and responsibilities of the VSC members and NGB officials during the process of implementation.

Thematic analysis is a procedure that involves categorising the themes that emerge from data, which is facilitated by a process known as coding. For Benaquisto (2008, p. 85), 'Coding consists of identifying potentially interesting events, features, phrases, behaviors, or stages of a process and distinguishing them with labels'. Emerging themes were documented and the connections between them were organised into meaningful categories.

4.5.4 Document analysis

To enable analysis of sports clubs responses to NGB policy requirements and the process by which governments select the mechanism (and role of clubs) for policy implementation, examination of qualitative data in the form of text is necessary. The

purpose of the document analysis was to understand the meanings of the documentation content while attempting to understand the social context within which they were produced, as this is an important factor to consider when studying public policy.

Atkinson and Coffey (2004) suggest documents are 'social facts' that are produced and shared in context. However, it is important to comprehend that documents alone do not explain social interaction between individuals or how public policy decisions are accomplished. Documents required close examination in the context of other data sources such as research literature and interviews in the social context in which the documents were produced. For example, the content of a policy document was cross-referenced with interview data from a policy actor who had referenced that particular document to shape an understanding of the social context and the mechanisms contained within that particular policy.

Documents are one of the common sources for comprehending the meaning of social events, activities and phenomena. As Altheide (1996) argues, documents provide a significant clue regarding what people do and how they act, and furthermore, how their actions, practices and behaviours are influenced (but not determined) by circumstances.

According to Yin (2009), the primary value of document analysis in qualitative research is that document analysis can reinforce evidence from other methods, such as data from semi-structured interviews. Therefore, document analysis enables a researcher to:

- Place symbolic meaning in context
- Track the process of its creation and influence on social definitions
- Let our understanding emerge through detailed investigation
- If we desire, use our understanding from the study of documents to change some social activities, including the production of certain documents (Altheide, 1996, p. 12).

Examples of the document analysis conducted during this study as the second form of data collection included official reports, official policy frameworks, strategy documents, journals, press releases and club constitutions, for example.

4.6 Reliability and construct validity

Reliability and validity are fundamental concepts in social science research. McIntyre (2004, p. 67) notes 'a reliable measure is one that gives consistent results', which must be capable of being used in further studies. Yet, a reliable measure is not necessarily a valid

result (Burnham, Lutz, Grant, & Layton-Henry, 2008), 'a valid measure is one that is actually measuring what you think you are measuring' (McIntyre, 2004, p. 66).

Examples of reliability issues would include: participant bias where interviewees may know the importance of 'good results' (C. Robson, 2011); interviewees giving the answers they think the researcher wants to hear; and, bias when interpreting the data. For this study, an example of a reliability issue would be concerning the coding of interview data and whether other researchers would code in the same way and reach a similar interpretation.

Construct validity is broadly defined as 'the extent to which operationalisation measures the concept it is supposed to measure' (Bagozzi, Yi, & Phillips, 1991, p. 421). For this study then, was the theoretical framework correctly operationalised? That is to say, are the policy implementation processes identified in the sports clubs and NGB case studies (determined from the document analysis and coded interview data) consistent with the whole data set and were the coded themes derived from the theoretical framework in a coherent manner?

In an attempt to counter threats to validity, a technique recognised as triangulation is often employed. In social science research, the term triangulation comprises the use of multiple methods and measures of an empirical phenomenon in order 'to overcome problems of bias and validity' (Blaikie, 1991, p. 115). Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 126) offer a similar definition suggesting triangulation is 'a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study'. The document analysis and interview transcriptions in this study allowed for triangulation of data.

Although reliability and validity are concepts greater associated with quantitative research, the principles are closely followed with qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1994) offered terms (used to establish the trustworthiness of research) such as *credibility*, *authenticity*, *dependability* and *confirmability*, which were regarded to align more appropriately with a constructivist/relativist paradigm. For example, analysis for this study was constantly tested with repeated reflection. This included debates with colleagues, peers and supervisors; and constant challenge to findings by the researcher and others when preliminary findings were presented at various conferences, which aimed to measure research quality and validate the credibility of analysis.

4.7 Summary of the research strategy

For this study, it was established that the philosophical positions which provide the most fruitful assumption for identifying and analysing how public policies for sport are determined (including the process that governments select the mechanism for policy delivery) and the role of sport clubs in the process of policy implementation were:

- A social ontology, whereby the world is structured and in 'which relationships between its constituent features are causal in bringing about outcomes' (Downward, 2005, p. 311).
- A critical realist epistemology. The importance of defining the epistemological (and ontological) position prior to conducting a study cannot be understated as it defines the research design. To reiterate the sentiments of Marsh et al. (1999, p. 11), 'an epistemological position is not optional, it is inevitable; it is not like a pullover, more like a skin'. Critical realists claim that an entity can (which does not mean it does) exist independently of our knowledge of it (Fleetwood, 2005). In sum, Marsh and Smith (2001, p. 31) view that 'critical realism acknowledges two points. First, while social phenomena exist independently of our interpretation of them, our interpretation/understanding of them affects outcomes. So, structures do not determine; rather they constrain and facilitate. Social science involves the study of reflexive agents who interpret and change structures. Second, our knowledge of the world is fallible; it is theory-laden. We need to identify and understand both external 'reality' and the social construction of that 'reality' if we are to explain the relationships between social phenomena. This study follows these fundamental principles.
- Follow ideographic methodology. Therefore, qualitative methods such as interviews and documentation analysis are utilised.
- Since this study is comparative in nature (policy requirements between sport clubs and NGBs), utilisation of case study research design is deemed most appropriate following deductive reasoning. That is, theory guides research.
- Concepts from the implementation literature formed the foundations of the theoretical framework used to guide the research; Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) top-down and Lipsky's (1980) bottom-up approaches of implementation analysis were used in conjunction Matland's (1995) synthesis of implementation theory. In addition, the meso-level Multiple Streams theory was employed when appropriate to illuminate the implementation process to strengthen the analysis.

Chapter 5 Sport England

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an introduction to Sport England (SE), NGBs, the *Clubmark* accreditation process (including associated policies within the framework), where *Clubmark* fits into SE's new club support tool, *Club Matters*.

5.2 Sport England

The Sports Council was created in 1972 by royal charter to support sport in the UK by providing strategic decision-making and approval of grant allocation (Houlihan, 2014). In 1994 the organisation was split into two being replaced by the UK Sports Council (for elite sport) and the England Sports Council (for community sport). The English Sports Council was rebranded Sport England in 1999 and is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the DCMS.

The role of SE is to work with various NGBs of sport, and other funded partners, to develop the community sport system by aiming to increase the number of people involved in sport. The SE website stated that the organisation is “committed to helping people and communities across the country create sporting habits for life. This means investing in organisations and projects that will get more people playing sport and creating opportunities for people to excel at their chosen sport.”¹⁵

The Executive team assumes responsibility for the general running of the organisation and nine Government-appointed regional champions focus on community sport. SE has three local teams across the country to work with local authorities and partners with the aim of making sport accessible in all regions. SE is divided into six directorates: Business Partnerships; Community Sport; Facilities and Planning; Corporate Services; NGB and Sport; and Insight. Given the nature of this study, the NGB and Sport directorate is of interest; it is responsible for managing Sport England's £100 million annual investment in the 46 recognised sports and national partners. Through relationship managers and additional teams, with individual areas of expertise, the directorate works with the NGBs

¹⁵ <https://www.sportengland.org/about-us/> (Accessed 16.06.15)

to provide technical support and expert advice to ensure the investment is effective. The specialist expertise of the NGB and Sport directorate includes:

- Talent development
- Participation
- Workforce
- Club development
- Disability
- Equality and diversity

The directorate is also responsible for managing several additional initiatives including: *Doorstep Clubs*; *Sport Makers*; *Clubmark*; and *Club Matters*¹⁶. *Clubmark* is the cornerstone of this study and will be introduced in greater detail following a brief introduction to NGBs.

5.3 National governing bodies

NGBs of sport in the UK are typically independent, organisations that are responsible for the governance of their respective sports. NGBs are non-profit organisations, which frequently rely on a volunteer board to oversee numerous activities that include “the organisation and management of competitions, coach development, increasing participation, developing talent, volunteer training, marketing and promoting the sport, and bidding for and hosting competitions” (Walters, Tacon, & Trenberth, 2011, p. 4). The role of the NGBs has developed over time. Current NGB responsibilities place emphasis on the development of the whole sport from grassroots through to elite, international competition (Houlihan and White, 2002).

Sport England currently recognises circa 150 different sports and are investing almost £500 million between 2013-2017 into 46 NGBs, who had submitted Whole Sport Plans (WSPs), with the aim of increasing community sport participation opportunities¹⁷. WSPs will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. The three case study sports in this study (boxing, swimming and rugby union) are all recognised by SE and, therefore, receive funding and support. SE provides investment in an effort to support and develop NGBs in a range of areas such as governance, commercial partnerships and legal issues¹⁸. In the

¹⁶ <https://www.sportengland.org/about-us/corporate-information/our-structure/> (Accessed 16.05.15)

¹⁷ <http://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-work/national-governing-bodies/> (Accessed 16.05.15)

¹⁸ <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/national-governing-bodies/why-ngbs-matter/> (Accessed 10.05.15)

same way that SE strives to develop well-governed NGBs, SE want NGB-accredited clubs to be well governed and organised. To help with this SE established the *Clubmark* framework.

5.4 *Clubmark*

Clubmark is a cross-sport accreditation framework for VSCs that primarily focuses on the junior and youth sections of a club¹⁹. The framework was introduced in 2002 with the aim of ensuring a club can provide the best possible experience for its members.

Clubmark is based on four primary criteria for club development against which a club is assessed once sufficient evidence is collected. These are (emphasis added):

- Activity/playing programmes - this includes, for example, coaching qualifications required, insurance and coach to participant ratios.
- Duty of care and welfare - appropriate risk assessments, health and safety policies, training, compliance and **child protection policies**.
- Knowing your club and its community - this ensures that your club is committed to fairness and equity in respect of the way in seeks to **attract and retain members from your local community**.
- Club management - which covers issues to do with club and committee structures and the general running of the organisation.²⁰

The original generic *Clubmark* framework (see Figure 5.1) consists of a matrix displaying the minimum standard (stating examples of required evidence, guidance notes, and information regarding additional support) for the sub-criteria required to satisfy each of the four primary criteria listed above. In total, there were 16 sub-criteria that clubs must meet to be awarded the accreditation. However, if a club is classed as 'adult only' then this figure is reduced to 13 criteria due to child protection policies not being applicable. In addition, the *Clubmark* website had a '*Clubmark* resources' page that provided 20 templates and a further 'additional supporting resources' page consisting of an additional 21 templates²¹. This level of support and guidance, provided by SE, is comprehensive and any club working towards the generic criteria has access to all of this documentation, which can greatly assist them through the process.

¹⁹ In December 2012, *Clubmark* accreditation was extended to sports clubs that comprised of adult only members. The accreditation process is the same as for junior clubs except it contains slightly different criteria.

²⁰ <http://www.clubmark.org.uk/what-clubmark/clubmark-explained> (Accessed 10.05.15)

²¹ <http://www.clubmark.org.uk/clubmark/getting-clubmark/resources-and-templates/clubmark-resources> (Accessed 10.05.15)

3. KNOWING YOUR CLUB AND ITS COMMUNITY				
Ref No.	Minimum criteria	Examples of evidence required	Guidance notes	Support available
3.1	The Club engages with and understands who its current members ¹ are and where they are from	Equal opportunity or equity policy Welcome pack Communications – newsletters, website, social media, etc. Club handbooks Appointed person for new member enquires Retention and reward activities Systems for collecting and acting on member feedback Statistics: number of members	The Club creates a welcoming atmosphere and quality opportunity for members and at all relevant levels of ability to retain its current members	Template 9 - Equity policy statement Template 14 - Introductory letter to parents/carers Template 19 - Chairperson's introduction letter Template 20 - Volunteer Coordinator welcome letter Support from NGB/CSP
3.2	The Club demonstrates an awareness and appreciation of its local community	The Club's demographic Can define the type of person /people it would like to attract Working in partnership with local organisations, volunteer centres, colleges, schools etc.	To increase participation and recruit players, volunteers and officials	Template 10 - Equity action plan Equity action plan good practise Support from NGB/CSP
3.3	The Club proactively encourages new members from the local community	Communications – newsletters, website, advertising, social media, etc. Recruitment activities Is aware and considers NGB priorities – evidence Statistics: number of new members	To support NGB and Sport England's targets to increase participation the club demonstrates actions taken to recruit new players, volunteers and officials	Template 10 - Equity action plan Support from NGB/CSP

¹ The term **members** can also refer to players, participants and volunteers

Figure 5.1 Section of SE's original generic *Clubmark*

National *Clubmark* figures indicate that there are over 14,000 sports clubs that have achieved *Clubmark* accreditation and over 4,000 clubs working towards the standard²². Once a club has achieved the *Clubmark* accreditation standard it is a requirement to submit renewal evidence following a period determined by its awarding body (which, is usually its NGB) of typically between one to four years.

Knight, Kavanagh & Page sports consultants managed and delivered *Clubmark* on behalf of SE until 2013. For a short period, SE internally managed *Clubmark*, but in March 2014 PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) commenced managing SE's new 'one-stop online shop', *Club Matters* (discussed later), which incorporated the *Clubmark* framework.

²² <http://www.clubmark.org.uk> (Accessed 10.05.15)

5.4.1 Achieving *Clubmark*

The NGB of any of the 46 SE-recognised sports can apply for the *Clubmark* license to award the accreditation. NGBs are allowed to tailor, to some extent, the generic framework to make it more relevant for their sport. SE cannot dictate what NGBs plan to do with their *Clubmark*; SE only ensure that there is reference to the minimum requirements set out in the generic SE framework (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15). If a sport is not recognised by SE (darts, surfing, and karate, for example) then it is not possible for the NGB of that particular sport to obtain a license. All three NGBs in this study are recognised by SE, they each have the awarding license and have all modified the generic *Clubmark* framework to have their own-badged accreditation. The sports of swimming and rugby union have renamed the generic *Clubmark* name to *swim21* and *Seal of Approval*, respectively. Boxing refers to the accreditation as *Clubmark*.

If a SE-recognised NGB does not have the *Clubmark* license (of which there were approximately 10 in mid-2015), then a County Sports Partnership (CSP) can award a successful club *Clubmark*, as long as the CSP holds a license. SE does not demand that NGBs apply for the license due to the fact that clubs wishing to work towards *Clubmark* under a non-licensed NGB can approach the local CSP. Only clubs that are affiliated to their (SE-recognised) NGB, or by the CSP, can achieve *Clubmark* status. It is not possible for clubs affiliated to a NGB that is not recognised by SE to achieve SE *Clubmark* accreditation. For some clubs, identifying which organisation to contact in order to register interest with *Clubmark* was difficult and confusing. As a result, SE developed a 'pathway to accreditation' to assist clubs. Since the introduction of the *Club Matters* platform (which, incorporates *Clubmark*, discussed later in the chapter) there is a prominent 'are you eligible?' section²³ that clearly explains the requirements and who to contact.

CSPs are networks of local agencies that have the objective to increase participation in sport and physical activity. CSPs arose from the local authority sports development partnerships formed to deliver SE's 'Active Sports' initiative, which aimed to facilitate progression of children's involvement in sport (Cook, 2010; Cryer, 2009). CSP partners include NGBs and their clubs, school sport partnerships, local authorities, sport and leisure facilities, primary care trusts and numerous other sport (and non-sport) organisations. Like NGBs, CSPs must apply for the *Clubmark* license. Currently, 38 CSPs (out of the total of 45 in England) are licensed to accredit clubs with *Clubmark*. SE are in

²³ <http://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/club-mark/> (Accessed 23.06.15)

the process of ensuring every CSP throughout the country holds the license to enable any club wishing to work towards achieving the framework will be able to receive the relevant guidance and support (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15). Clubs can seek advice and support from their NGB or CSP. However, not all NGBs, for example swimming, involve CSPs in the *Clubmark* accreditation process.

The current figures for the clubs that have achieved *Clubmark* status, across the three sports in England this case study are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Affiliated *Clubmark* accredited clubs for the case study sports (December 2015)

	Swimming ²⁴	Rugby Union ²⁵	Boxing ²⁶
Number of NGB-affiliated clubs nationally	1,151	2,100	904
<i>Clubmark</i> accredited clubs nationally	496 (43%)	655 (32%)	75 (8%)
Number of NGB-affiliated clubs in the selected region	97	52 ²⁷	136
<i>Clubmark</i> accredited clubs in the selected region	62 (64%)	23 (44%)	32 (24%)

Sources: NGB websites and interview data from NGB officials

It can be seen from the table that the three sports have very distinct profiles. Rugby union, nationally, has approximately double the total number of affiliated clubs than swimming and boxing. Comparing the number of *Clubmark* accredited clubs, nationally; rugby union also has the highest total, closely followed by swimming, with boxing far behind – having fewer than a hundred clubs that have achieved the accreditation standard, which is the equivalent of only eight percent of boxing’s NGB affiliated clubs.

²⁴ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/affiliated-clubs-membership> (Accessed 20.04.15)

²⁵ Email correspondence with a Rugby Development Officer, 24.04.15

²⁶ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/about-us/> (Accessed 20.04.15)

²⁷ Figure consists of 40 voting and 12 non-voting member clubs. Voting clubs are in membership of the RFU and are entitled to the privileges of membership of the RFU; non-voting are clubs not meet the criteria for voting membership of the RFU but are clubs that have separate status and identity and in membership, approved by its Constituent Body (such as: casual clubs; work teams; some student clubs; some service clubs), schools, leisure rugby organisations and organisations such as the England Deaf Rugby Union and the Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby Union.

Examining the same information for the region in which this study has been conducted the figures paint an intriguing picture of regional variability. The sport with the highest number of affiliated clubs in the region is boxing, followed by swimming, then rugby union, which has approximately half the number of accredited clubs than that of swimming. All three sports in this study have performed better (in terms of the number of *Clubmark* accredited clubs) in the region compared with the national figures.

One fundamental reason for the accreditation disparities between sports, nationally and regionally, is due to the fact that *Clubmark* currently does not have any accreditation target performance indicators within WSPs (2013-2017 investments). As the senior official of SE suggested, during the interview (19.03.15), the reason there is no performance indicator for *Clubmark* was to ensure that the accreditation does not become a 'numbers project for NGBs and rushing clubs through the process to hit targets each quarter'. The SE official described how SE preferred that NGBs embraced *Clubmark*, using it as a developmental tool, rather than speeding clubs through the accreditation process, with the risk varying standards of quality.

5.4.2 Non-licensed NGBs

Bowls England, the National Ice Skating Association and British Fencing are examples of SE-recognised NGBs that do not hold the license to award *Clubmark* to its affiliated clubs and that rely on their local CSPs to award *Clubmark*²⁸. Discussing the issue of non-licensed NGBs with a CSP Partnership Manager, she suggested that it tended to be the smaller NGBs, who have limited capacity, that do not hold the *Clubmark* accreditation license. Therefore, they coordinate with CSPs who then play a pivotal role in supporting local clubs through the *Clubmark* process and awarding a successful club their accreditation (email correspondence, 08.04.15). Although England Boxing (boxing's NGB) is a (comparatively) small NGB, the NGB does hold the license to award *Clubmark*, as do the Rugby Football Union and the Amateur Swimming Association.

5.5 Safeguarding

In the UK millions of children participate in sport every week with sport viewed as being important for a child's health and development. For a number of years, the government,

²⁸ <http://www.clubmark.org.uk/getting-clubmark> (Accessed 20.06.15)

DCMS, Sport England and a variety of sports' NGBs have implemented policies that ensure all children have the best possible experience in an environment where children are safe from the possibility of mistreatment. The UK government's current overarching child safeguarding strategy, termed 'Every Child Matters,' coupled with generic UK legislation, guidance and policies identify five key outcomes for children:

- Being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle.
- Staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect.
- Enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood.
- Making a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour.
- Economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life (ASA, 2012b, p. 5).

Brackenridge (2001) suggested that the moment of sporting truth occurred in 1993 when former Olympic swimming coach Paul Hickson was charged with sexual assaults against past teenage swimmers in his care. He was convicted of 15 sexual offences. The 'Hickson case' and similar cases placed child abuse and sexual exploitation on the policy agenda in Britain. Subsequently, Sport England commenced work with NGBs to design child protection policies.

In 2001, the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) was established as a partnership between UK Sports Councils, NGBs, CSPs and other organisations to help children play sport in a safe environment²⁹. The CPSU was jointly funded by SE and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). The CPSU has set standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport, which are mandatory for NGBs and CSPs. The standards framework encourages sports organisations to safeguard children, in line with their statutory responsibilities, and to ensure best practice. There are three levels of achievement: preliminary, intermediate and advanced. To qualify for the intermediate and advanced levels, it is a requirement that organisations show commitment and action in keeping children and young people safe³⁰.

Safeguarding and welfare are fundamental elements of *Clubmark* that fall within the 'duty of care and welfare' section. Clubs that have been awarded *Clubmark* are required to have rules, policies and procedures relating to safety and best practice. The *Clubmark* website stated:

²⁹ <https://thecpsu.org.uk/about-us/> (Accessed 18.06.15)

³⁰ http://archive.sportengland.org/support_advice/children_and_young_people/child_protection.aspx (Accessed 18.06.15)

It is the duty of every club to give serious consideration to the manner in which it conducts its activities and to take all reasonable steps to ensure that participants, visitors and volunteers can enjoy the sport offered by the club in a safe environment. That obligation is particularly important with regard to the safety and welfare of young sports participants and vulnerable adults³¹

To ensure the safe environment for its members clubs need to familiarise themselves with NGB requirements and adhere to them. Examples of the environmental factors suggested on the *Clubmark* website include:

- Club venue(s) – It is important that the club ensures that both the venue and equipment it uses are fit for purpose and appropriate for the age groups and ability levels of the performers using them
- Emergency procedures/reporting incidents and accidents – It is good practice to record and store reports of any accidents or incidents dealt with by club members
- Keeping records, attendance and medical registers – It is strongly recommended that the appropriate coach or team manager keeps a register of attendance at each coaching session³¹

Clubmark has supplementary criteria designed specifically for clubs with a junior section (members under the age of 18 years old):

- The club has adopted the NGB child protection policy ensuring compliance with the child protection guidelines and procedures issued by the NGB
- Club members and coaches are appropriately trained in safeguarding and child protection – It is a requirement that the welfare officer and at least one coach has attended CPSU accredited training in ‘Safeguarding and Protecting Children.’³¹

According to a senior SE official, the organisation was currently reviewing its safeguarding policies to expand them to incorporate additional demographics:

We need to look at inclusion and disability. We need to think more broadly than just children when we talk about safeguarding...Going forward we will be speaking to EFDS (English Federation of Disability Sport) and the CPSU who also work with adults as well. So we will have safeguarding across the board. (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15)

Lang and Hartill (2015) stressed that with the range of NGB safeguarding budgets and the voluntary workforce in small NGBs, questions are raised about the efficacy of the roles and value placed on safeguarding. However, to support NGBs in managing safeguarding an

³¹ <http://www.clubmark.org.uk/what-clubmark/clubmark-explained/duty-care-and-welfare> (Accessed 18.06.15)

independent National Safeguarding Panel for sport (NSP), comprising of solicitors, the police and social work professionals was established in 2013.

Not only did NGBs and SE treat safeguarding in sport as a priority, the issue of safeguarding was also clearly on the government's agenda. On the 17th December 2015 the DCMS published a new strategy (aimed at improving physical activity rates in the UK) called *Sporting Future: A New Strategy for an Active Nation*. The new strategy contained a section dedicated to safety and wellbeing, which stated the government understood how that 'feeling unsafe or excluded from sport is a significant barrier to getting involved in sport and physical activity for some groups...but a dangerous environment puts them off' (p. 70). Therefore, the strategy suggested that the government would develop a comprehensive plan to ensure everyone involved in sport (from VSCs to elite-level) can more effectively receive the correct duty of care (DCMS, 2015). This is a clear example of a top-down approach of implementation where the government have taken a strong line on implementation. This is reiterated by the fact that the government established an independent Working Group that focused on developing recommendations for a new *Duty of Care in sport*, chaired by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson. Although the findings of this report were published post-data collection and analysis of this study, the report is mentioned in the conclusion chapter to provide a current context and implications for future research.

5.6 Participation and membership

Statistics from Active People Survey 9 (for the period between October 2014 to October 2015) that was published in December 2015, indicated that over 15.7 million people played sport once a week, which was over 1.65 million more than when London won the bid to host the 2012 Games in 2005³². However, there have been difficulties with maintaining the upward participation trend. The statistics, which covered October 2014 to March 2015, indicated that 15.5 million people took part in sport at least once a week, which was a drop of 222,000 from the previous in six months. This fluctuating participation trend has been a concern for many years. The Active People Survey (APS) measures the number of adults taking part in sport across England. The APS results published in December 2015 showed that although swimming continued to be the sport with the highest participation, the number continued to decline. For the two other sports

³² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/35061399> (Accessed 15.12.15)

in this study, figures during the same period indicated an increase in the numbers taking part.

SE sets NGBs targets to increase the number of people who play sport regularly and the current focus is predominantly on increasing the number of 14-25-year-olds and disabled people playing sport once a week. In January 2012 the DCMS, in partnership with SE, launched the current youth sport strategy: *Creating A Sporting Habit for Life* (DCMS, 2012). As the title suggests the strategy seeks to engage the age group with sport in the hope of encouraging life-long participation.

Increasing sport participation and increasing club membership might be perceived as being interrelated. However, each sport selected for this study exhibited a complex relationship between participation and membership:

- Swimming had a substantial difference between participation figures and club membership figures. Recent participation figures indicate that over 2.5 million people (age 16+) were swimming once a week in 2015/16³³. The SE APS9-10 data reveals that only 3.9 percent (of the 2.5 million) were members of a club. Swimming is the highest participation sport in the UK, and has been for a number of years; the fact that anyone can visit the local swimming pool to participate in the sport and do not have to be a member of a club is an important factor to consider. However, although 2.5 million was high, it was down 144,200 in six months³⁴. In fact, the long-term decline in swimming was a major concern for SE; more than 720,000 people have stopped swimming over the past decade³⁵. The continued participation decline across all sports led Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch, to promise a new strategy for sport "as a matter of urgency"³⁶ due to the significant amount of public funding investment and minimal success.
- Rugby union had a much smaller difference between participation and membership figures compared with swimming. It is difficult to participate (outside of a school environment) in the most recognisable 15-a-side format of the game without being a member of a club. However, rugby union's NGB offers a 'Touch rugby' option, which is marketed as a social fitness opportunity that is 'a fun and friendly environment for both men and women of all abilities to get involved in touch rugby'³⁷. Therefore, people can participate in this form

³³ <https://www.sportengland.org/research/who-plays-sport/by-sport/> (Accessed 20.06.16)

³⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/swimming/33091363> (Accessed 20.06.16)

³⁵ <https://www.sportengland.org/news-and-features/news/2015/june/11/further-decline-in-swimming-numbers-dominate-latest-sports-figures/> (Accessed 20.06.16)

³⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/swimming/33091363> (Accessed 20.06.16)

³⁷ <http://www.englandrugbyfiles.com/o2touch/> (Accessed 20.06.16)

and also another form called 'Tag rugby', which is where tag belt or tag shorts replicate a tackle³⁸ without being a member of a club. The latest APS participation statistics indicated that 197,000 (16+) play rugby union once a week and that 64.8 per cent of those playing rugby do in fact belong to a club. The participation trend for rugby union has fluctuated over the past decade but the recent statistics indicate a slight increase compared to the 186,000 participants captured with APS1 (October 2005-October 2006)³⁹. Again, this highlights the stubborn nature of participation rates and how difficult it is for a NGB and SE to generate any significant increase.

- Boxing had a significant difference between its membership and participation figures. Local gyms run 'Boxercise' classes, for example, where the individual does not have to be a member of a club. Many amateur boxing clubs also offer open pay-per-session options, which means the individual does not have to be a member of the club. The latest APS participation statistics indicated that there were 160,000 people (age 16+) boxing once a week. Of those participating 19.3 per cent are members of a club. Comparing the participation figures over the past decade for boxing the sport has experienced similar fluctuating trends to those of rugby union. The positive news for boxing is that the latest participation statistics are in increase from the 115,500 participants captured with APS1 (October 2005-October 2006). Yet, 160,000 is a drop from the APS9 (Oct 2014 - Sep 2015) figure of 166,400⁴⁰. Once again, boxing, like so many other sports, have struggled to make any significant impact in consistently increasing participation.

Although swimming has the highest participation rates, less than 4 per cent are club members. Boxing has the fewest participants (of the three sports in this study) but has nearly 20 per cent club members. Rugby union had more participants than boxing but thousands less than swimming, yet has approximately three times more club members than boxing and approximately 16 times the number of club members than swimming. Therefore, taking into consideration the club member differences and the constantly fluctuating rates highlighted above, SE has to carefully select and agree participation and membership targets with each of the 46 recognised NGBs.

Fundamental to the implementation of SE's participation strategy are the series of agreements WSPs on targets between the organisation and the 46 recognised NGBs. A WSP is a four-year business plan that a NGB submits to SE, which outlines its strategies to grow participation in identified age groups and nurture athlete talent during the period.

³⁸ <http://www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/players/forms-of-rugby/tag-rugby/> (Accessed 20.06.16)

³⁹ https://www.sportengland.org/media/10746/1x30_sport_16plus-factsheet_aps10q2.pdf (Accessed 20.06.16)

⁴⁰ https://www.sportengland.org/media/10746/1x30_sport_16plus-factsheet_aps10q2.pdf (Accessed 20.06.16)

SE assesses the strategies the NGBs set out and award target-related funding based on that assessment.

CSPs are contracted by SE to support NGBs with the delivery of their WSPs, which contain participation targets but not *Clubmark* accreditation targets (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15). CSPs work along side NGBs offering their knowledge of their local area, networks and contacts, and marketing skills to ensure the NGB's plans are successfully implemented⁴¹.

The participation targets set by SE vary considerably across the recognised sports. The method by which SE measures the performance of each sport also varies. For example, the sport of triathlon is measured by the number of individual race starts in events that take place in England and handball by its membership figures⁴². However, the three sports in this research are measured by the APS. The participation targets for the penultimate year of the SE's current five-year youth and community strategy are displayed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Participation targets measurable by APS in the 2013-2017 WSPs

Sport	Totals	
	APS9 (Apr. 2014-Sept.2015)	Year 4 (2016/2017)
Swimming	2,505,700	2,958,100*
Rugby Union	191,900	215,000
Boxing	166,400	<i>TBC</i>

* Denotes where a target has been agreed for Year 1 (13/14) only

Source: Relevant information taken from the Sport England website⁴³

Considering the *Year 4* targets in Table 5.2 and comparing them with the latest APS9 figures (previously discussed), it can be seen that the sport of swimming has seen a decrease in participation and is approximately half a million short of the *Year 4* target. Similarly, the latest figures for rugby union are down on the *Year 4* target. According to a senior SE official:

[NGBs] have to submit their Whole Sport Plans based on their insight. We then agree and we have a relationship with them to monitor progress as they go through. So, the Active People Survey every year will tell us where they are on their journey. It's now much more

⁴¹ http://www.cspnetwork.org/en/about_csp_s/ngb_sport/ (Accessed 23.06.15)

⁴² <http://www.sportengland.org/media/116626/Agreed-NGB-WSP-targets-1-.pdf> (Accessed 03.07.15)

⁴³ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/3743/agreed-ngb-wsp-targets-1.pdf> (Accessed 03.07.15)

about payment for results. If they are behind then there's a discussion to be had to identify if their intelligence was wrong in the first place, or if something happened during the year, or you're not just performing well enough? Is there a better way to allocate your funding to improve the sport? (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15)

It is the responsibility of each NGB to decide the most appropriate way for them to increase their participation. The club environment might not be the best setting to achieve participation targets for some sports; conversely, the club environment is the primary or only setting for some sports. As highlighted above, the three sports selected for this study have distinct club environments, where club membership in relation to the number of participants range from approximately four per cent to 65 per cent.

5.6.1 Initiatives

Places People Play is the London 2012 Olympic mass participation legacy initiative. SE delivers the £135 million initiative, in partnership with the British Olympic Association (BOA) and the British Paralympic Association (BPA) with the backing of The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and the London 2012 Inspire mark. Although this initiative is rooted in elite sport success, VSCs play a vital role in its implementation. Table 2.1 in the context chapter explained the purpose of the three key components and detailed the sub-categories. The reason *Places People Play* is highlighted in this chapter is because the fundamental focus of the initiative is to drive up sport participation where NGBs and CSPs (and in turn, VSCs) are heavily involved in its delivery and implementation. Furthermore, it will be seen in subsequent case study chapters that NGBs and CSPs use motivational techniques, such as suggesting to clubs that the likelihood of access to grants (*Inspired Facilities* in rugby and boxing, for example) would be increased if a club has *Clubmark* accreditation.

There are also a number of other initiatives that CSPs are involved with, which include *Satellite Clubs* and *School-club links*. *Satellite Clubs* are an extension of VSCs, primarily targeting 14-25 age groups and are a stepping-stone to VSCs. *Satellite Clubs* are determined by local need, have the potential to offer new sports, formats and opportunities aiming to attract new members to sports clubs. The idea is that *Satellite Clubs* are run by established VSCs who can bring their expertise and enthusiasm to local places where young people already meet⁴⁴. Numerous rugby and swimming clubs within

⁴⁴ Website address available to examiners on request

the region of England where this study places its focus are involved in the *Satellite Clubs* initiative. One swimming club in this study was involved and this will be discussed in the swimming chapter. *School-club links* is a formal agreement between a school and a VSC that creates a mutually beneficial partnership between the two. The link aims to provide a pathway for young people from school sport to community sport, engaging them as participants, volunteers, coaches and/or officials. All three sports, and some clubs in this study are involved with this initiative.

One of the benefits of being a *Clubmark* accredited club was the opportunity to take part in the *Sainsbury's Active Kids* scheme, which allowed sports clubs to use vouchers for a range of sports kit and equipment. The *Active Kids* initiative was introduced in 2005 and its aim has remained unchanged - to help young people of all ages and abilities lead healthier, more active lifestyles whilst having fun⁴⁵. This tangible benefit could be perceived as SE utilising a remunerative compliance mechanism (Etzioni, 1961).

5.7 Quality assurance

Implementation of the three selected policies (*Clubmark*, safeguarding and participation) does raise issues for SE and NGBs about how they ensure the quality of implementation. There is an extensive literature on quality assurance, and although this research is more focused on developing a greater understanding of the quality of implementation, rather than a focus on quality assurance, it is worthwhile introducing the concept for completeness.

Quality assurance is a method of preventing or reducing issues when delivering services to customers and is applicable in a wide range of sectors such as: healthcare (Donabedian, 2003); chemical engineering (J. K. Taylor, 1987); food safety (Holleran, Bredahl, & Zaihet, 1999); and sport services (Tsitskari, Tsiotras, & Tsiotras, 2006). Taylor (1987) defined quality assurance as “a system of activities whose purpose is to provide to the producer or user of a product or a service the assurance that it meets defined standards of quality with a stated level of confidence” (p. 3). The *International Organization for Standardization* (ISO) is an independent, non-governmental organisation that provides world-class specifications for products, services and systems, to ensure quality, safety and efficiency⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ <http://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/club-mark/sainsburys-active-kids/> (Accessed 27.03.16)

⁴⁶ <https://www.iso.org/about-us.html> (Accessed 06.06.2017)

The ISO 9000 family of specifications addresses aspects of quality management, providing guidance and tools for organisations to ensure products/services meet customer's requirements, and that quality is consistently improved⁴⁷.

Customer satisfaction and service quality are two other concepts, which closely relate to quality assurance. In the mid-1980s Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) offered a conceptual model of service quality. They argued that the attainment of quality in products and services had become "a pivotal concern of the 1980s" (p. 41). In the early 1990s Cronin, Taylor and Taylor (1992) investigated the measurement of service quality. They suggested that the SERVQUAL scale was inadequate and recommended that a performance-based measure of service quality would be a beneficial development for the construct. Since the 1990s, the concepts of quality assurance and service quality have made their way from the mainstream management literature, appearing more frequently in the sport management literature due to the importance sport organisations (like in most other sectors) place on providing the best service possible for their customers or members. Robinson (2003) concluded that service quality schemes became a popular way of improving efficiency and effectiveness, and a method to help with responses to changes in leisure services government legislation. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the introduction of Clubmark was, in part, a response by SE in relation to the Hickson case. It is clear that SE wanted to ensure that Clubmark had the potential to be an effective framework so initially appointed consultants Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP) to oversee the management of Clubmark when it was first introduced. On KKP's website it states that:

*"Our reputation for quality is underpinned by ISO 9001 for: provision of management consultancy (and the design and development of training services) in respect of leisure, sport and regeneration, including strategic planning and land use planning."*⁴⁸

The statement on the website reiterates the importance that SE placed on the quality management of *Clubmark* by appointing a company who were experts in quality management. ISO 9001 is based on a number of quality management principles, which include: a strong customer focus; motivation and implication of top management; the process approach; and continual improvement⁴⁹.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the concern with top-down policy implementation is to ensure that there is quality implementation in terms of avoiding policy erosion and decay.

⁴⁷ <https://www.iso.org/iso-9001-quality-management.html> (Accessed 06.06.2017)

⁴⁸ <http://www.kkp.co.uk/about-us/> (Accessed 06.06.2017)

⁴⁹ <https://www.iso.org/iso-9001-quality-management.html> (Accessed 06.06.2017)

Assuring the quality is an aspect to consider for policy implementation, rather than it being a central characteristic as with the 'evaluation' stage of the public policy cycle (see figure 1.1). However, following a period of more than 10 years since the introduction of *Clubmark* SE were interested in evaluating the effectiveness of the framework and so commissioned a report, which will now be discussed in the following section.

5.8 Effectiveness of *Clubmark*

While discussing *Clubmark* accreditation and the process with the senior SE official, he was asked if he could provide any exemplars of good NGBs? Were there any NGBs that had successfully grown participation or were there any NGBs that SE would comment regarding the approach they adopted when working with clubs through the *Clubmark* process. His response was as follows:

The FA [Football Association] pushed their version of *Clubmark* quite well. The way they've done it is that any club that wishes to play in an affiliated league will need to be Charter Standard (the FA's tailored *Clubmark*). It's a good model...they have the biggest number of clubs on our *Clubmark* database – around 5,000 to 6,000 clubs 'Clubmarked', way above any of the other NGBs...The RFU [Rugby Football Union] have quite a good model. They've looked at it; they've stripped it back, re-thought it. Tennis is just working on theirs – it's just gone online. There are also others who are beginning to re-assess their *Clubmark*. (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15)

The effectiveness of *Clubmark* can be examined from two levels: a) understanding how effective the roll out of *Clubmark* has been; and b) the effectiveness of *Clubmark* in (i) attracting more participants and (ii) improving safeguarding practices. Starting with the second level, the effectiveness of increasing participation and improving safeguarding practices will be analysed and discussed using the data from the three forthcoming case studies. SE recently commissioned independent research to examine the effectiveness of *Clubmark*, which can be used to help understand the first level. Research specialists' mruk consulted with a range of stakeholders (clubs, NGBs, CSPs, local authorities and other national partners) and published the evaluation report in September 2014. The key findings are highlighted in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Summary of key findings from mruk’s *Clubmark* evaluation report

Primary Research Themes	Key Findings
Awareness & involvement with <i>Clubmark</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High awareness (NGBs & clubs) • Clubs high level of involvement • NGBs heavily involved
Perceived value of <i>Clubmark</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits – safer environment, more efficient clubs • Drawbacks – bureaucracy, time-consuming process; NGBs find <i>Clubmark</i> difficult to ‘sell’.
Accreditation process (how clubs implement <i>Clubmark</i> and how NGBs help clubs implement <i>Clubmark</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs – proud once achieved accreditation but over 30% of clubs suggested <i>Clubmark</i> is not a central priority in the day-to-day running of their club & only referred to it ahead of a health check or re-accreditation. • NGBs – level of interaction varies across NGBs, some NGBs lack capacity to provide continued support; problem that <i>Clubmark</i> is not embedded in all clubs; some NGBs create incentive schemes for clubs maintaining their <i>Clubmark</i>
Impact of <i>Clubmark</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs – overall clubs satisfied with <i>Clubmark</i> • NGBs – valued, gives club members and parents assurance that a club has high standards of health, safety & welfare; makes clubs more attractive and fundable to grant-giving bodies; encourages clubs to consider aspects that they may not have otherwise paid attention to (social issues such as race, gender & disability)
Optimising <i>Clubmark</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profile of <i>Clubmark</i> needs increasing (greater SE involvement would benefit; parents not often aware of <i>Clubmark</i> benefits when selecting a club) • Accreditation process needs improving (lack of NGB club support capacity is problematic; application process should be less time-consuming; raise awareness of additional support for clubs)

Source: data extracted from mruk’s report (Cope, Haq, Garside, Pannell, & Gooders, 2014)

The mruk report concluded that SE need to better demonstrate the benefits of a club achieving *Clubmark* accreditation status. Likewise, it was also found that the benefits of achieving *Clubmark* were not sold or delivered well enough by NGBs. The report recommended that SE and NGBs should emphasize the fact that an accredited club would set them apart from non-accredited clubs in terms of their appeal to both funding bodies and the public.

In addition, it was found that clubs had both positive and negative views on the accreditation process. Once clubs had 'bought-in' to the process, overall, they could see the added benefits. However, some clubs suggested that the paper-based evidence collection process was overly time-consuming and some felt there should be greater flexibility in the criteria to allow for adaption to what they perceive as important for their club (Cope et al., 2014).

This report was the first evaluation of *Clubmark*, for SE, since the introduction of the framework in 2002 – an indicator in itself that SE felt *Clubmark* required a review. Additionally, a senior official at SE admitted, "*Clubmark* hasn't progressed, as we had liked. It was being functional, if I'm honest. Just ticking along. Is it where it should be? Probably not." (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15) Analysis indicated that SE had taken heed of a number of the findings from the mruk report. For example, SE recognised that *Clubmark* had not evolved as anticipated and the suggestion that "they [SE] need to catch up" (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15) and this was one of the key reasons why *Clubmark* was integrated with the new *Club Matters* initiative.

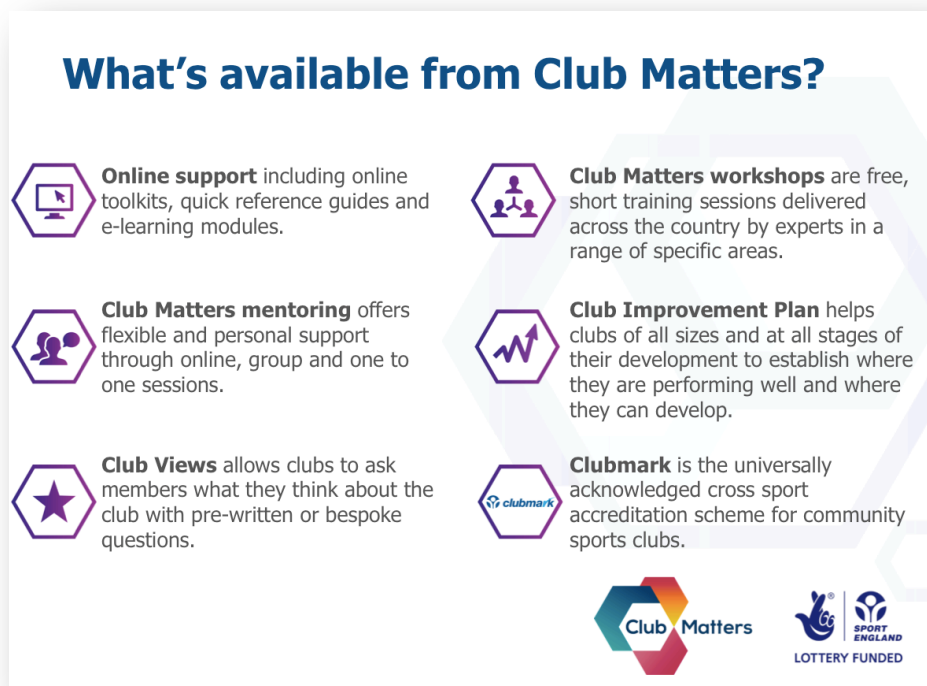
A major concern for SE was the realisation that there was a significant lack of an evaluation of *Clubmark* for such a long period of time. Incorporating *Clubmark* with *Club Matters* was a strategic move to ensure *Clubmark* would be evaluated on a more regular basis, as the SE official explained, "because it's [*Clubmark*] intertwined with *Club Matters* it [*Clubmark*] will be part of the ongoing *Club Matters* evaluation. So, we will have better information about which clubs in which sports will be going through *Clubmark* accreditation. We will have better intelligence from the NGB and CSP as to why clubs aren't going through. This week we've set up a new innovation fund for CSPs to find the best way and best practice for embedding *Club Matters* and *Clubmark* into their locality" (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15). Setting up this type of fund will enable SE to gain the local knowledge, which is a sensible strategy for attempting successful implementation of the combined initiative and framework.

5.9 Club Matters

On 12th February 2015 Sport England launched *Club Matters* a new support, learning and guidance resource environment for all sports. This new online-based platform was introduced partly in response to feedback from NGBs who suggested an online resource system would be beneficial for clubs and NGBs (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15). The mruk research indicated *Clubmark* would be improved if moved online, a view shared by the SE officer who commented that, “clubs have told us it [*Clubmark*] would be better online, stakeholders have suggested it and internal discussions have asked why is it [*Clubmark*] not online so we are looking into this as a very realistic option” (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15). Plans to move all of *Clubmark* online have already been put in place, as once senior SE official explained, “*Clubmark* needs to align itself more with Sport England’s strategic objectives so we will get a group together to work out what changes are required and how to move it online. It will be a consulted, reflective process where we will use the knowledge of NGBs” (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15).

Another issue the mruk report highlighted was that some NGBs wanted an improved relationship with SE. During an interview with a senior SE official this point was raised. His response demonstrated that SE were aware of the issue and that launching *Club Matters* was, in part, a strategic response: “I want to try and create a communication platform – whether it be quarterly meetings or online where we have discussions around club development. That’s been missing from the sector. I don’t think there’s enough sharing of good practice across NGBs” (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15).

Club Matters combined all of Sport England’s previous support projects to assist with the development and running a sustainable club. The support offered by SE through *Club Matters* is depicted in Figure 5.2.



Source: Slide from SE's Introduction to *Club Matters* presentation⁵⁰

Figure 5.2 Overview of *Club Matters*

Although there are currently no performance indicators within WSPs (2013-2017 investments) based on *Clubmark*, SE have set performance indicators for *Club Matters*, which demonstrates the importance that SE have placed on the new initiative. Prior to the introduction of *Club Matters*, *Clubmark* was a stand-alone framework. Incorporating *Clubmark* within *Club Matters*, SE is hoping the publicity of the launch will provide an increased awareness of the benefits associated with achieving *Clubmark* accreditation.

5.10 Conclusion

Data discussed in this chapter revealed that the implementation of *Clubmark* has not been straightforward for SE. Some NGBs suggested that it had been difficult to obtain acceptance from some clubs in regard to the value of *Clubmark* and that some NGBs did not have the capacity to support and guide clubs through the accreditation process, which impacted implementation. The negative feedback surrounding *Clubmark*, provided to SE

⁵⁰ <http://www.sportenglandclubmatters.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Club-Matters-PowerPoint.doc.pptx> (Accessed 02.05.16)

from VSCs via NGBs, led SE to conduct independent research that examined the effectiveness of the framework. The report found that the *Clubmark* accreditation process had become outdated. As a result *Clubmark* was incorporated with a new online environment *Club Matters*, which was part of SE's strategic plan to improve the communication channel and resources for VSCs. The subsequent case studies will analyse the implementation of *Clubmark* (and the associated policies) across the three selected sports to understand if there was any variation in the process.

Chapter 6 Case Study One: Boxing

6.1 Introduction

Each of the three sports' case studies focus on three main policy strands: Sport England's *Clubmark* framework; safeguarding; and increasing membership and participation. This chapter presents the findings from boxing's NGB, England Boxing (formerly, the Amateur Boxing Association of England⁵¹), and data from two boxing clubs.

6.2 England Boxing

On 25th February 1880 a general meeting took place that was attended by representatives from clubs interested in amateur boxing. It was here the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) of England (ABAE) was formed. At the end of this meeting 16 rules had been set out; the most important was for judges to award 'points'. This novel approach to boxing was a success and soon adopted by the professional code all around the world (Hickey, 1980). The fundamental role of the ABA was to deliver a basic structure to amateur boxing throughout England and adopt stricter rules to provide greater protection of its member boxers (Hickey, 1980). The ABAE evolved to become the NGB for amateur boxing. Nowadays, the ABAE's (EB's) responsibilities include the governance, development and administration of boxing in clubs, competition and the promotion of Olympic-style (amateur) boxing throughout England⁵².

In 1979, the ABAE outlined its core purpose for its members in the ABA rulebook:

To promote and foster the spirit of amateur sportsmanship and to encourage and develop a high physical and moral standard in the youth of the nation by the educational and healthy pursuit of the national pastime of amateur boxing (Hickey, 1980, p. 18)

After the turn of the millennium – and the establishment of the CPSU working in partnership with UK Sports Councils, NGBs, CSPs and other organisations to help children participate in a safe environment (in the wake of the sport-related sexual abuse scandals)

⁵¹ The full title is the ABAE. However, in many of the NGB's documentation and everyday conversation the NGB was referred to simply as the ABA, which will be used throughout this chapter, even though it refers to the ABAE.

⁵² <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/about-us/> (Accessed 15.03.15)

– the ABAE published in 2005 the *ABAE Health and Safety Standards in Clubs*⁵³, which provided guidance to clubs on best practice.

From the mid-2000s to 2013 the ABAE employed a team of Boxing Development Officers (BDOs), in selected cities, who would work with clubs to offer support and advice. During this period one of the BDOs led the programme nationally to developed supporting resources for the ABAE website, which enabled clubs (that did not have an officer available to offer hands-on support) to receive support and guidance. In addition, the national lead BDO ensured each affiliated club had a named ABAE contact that could offer telephone and email support (EB official email correspondence, 18.04.2016). These latter two points are the first indicators that boxing's NGB were found lacking in capacity to provide full support to its member clubs.

In 2013 the ABAE was rebranded England Boxing Ltd., a non-profit organisation. The EB structure was reformed, now consisting of a Board of Directors, a Chief Executive Officer, Head of Development, Club Support Officers (to replace BDOs), Regional secretaries and various sub-committees. The EB website states that the Board of Directors are responsible for:

Targets and delivery of the Whole Sport Plan, and...for financial management, commercial explanation, development of corporate identity, reputation and media profile, overview of rules and regulations, sports administration and development.⁵⁴

The sub-committees monitor and advise on a range of areas, such as: medical; audit; championships, technical, and rules, referees and judges; performance and coaching; clubs, membership and development; compliance, legal and Human Resources; commercial; and communications. Volunteers sit on each sub-committee, and are expected to attend quarterly meetings and have their expenses paid⁵⁵. The 2013 restructure saw EB align with Sport England's regional structure. EB established nine regional associations, each of which supported by a regional secretary. These secretaries are the point of contact to help support the clubs and members within their association. Each region also had a medical registrar who was responsible for the administration of: medical forms; boxer, coach and officials record books; and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) forms. Each region has an appointed welfare officer, who offers advice and support for any child

⁵³ http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/assets/file/clubmark/clubmark_resource_pack_-_jan_2010_tcm97-171404.doc. (Located in Appendix 4 of the ABAE Clubmark Accreditation Programme Resource Pack, Accessed 17.02.16)

⁵⁴ <http://www.englandboxing.org/aba/index.cfm/about-us/the-board-of-directors/> (Accessed 17.02.16)

⁵⁵ <http://www.englandboxing.org/aba/index.cfm/about-us/sub-committees/> (Accessed 17.02.16)

protection issues⁵⁶. In addition to the regional secretaries, regional Club Support Officers (CSOs) were established, whose role is discussed later.

The International Boxing Association (originally known as, and often referred to as, Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur (AIBA)) developed a set of Technical Rules to ensure fair contests. On 1st January 2014 the AIBA Technical Rules were introduced in England, which replaced the original ABAE/EB rules⁵⁷

6.3 Community boxing clubs

At the time of writing EB have circa 19,000 members across 904 affiliated clubs in England⁵⁸. Two community boxing clubs located in the East Midland region of England were selected for this case study. Within the region there were 140 clubs affiliated to EB (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). When a club wishes to become affiliated to EB it submits an application to their regional association, not directly to the NGB. Once a club becomes affiliated it then has the opportunity to work towards *Clubmark* accreditation, where EB and other support groups guide the club volunteers through the process. However, as discussed below (section 6.8) the club affiliation process can be problematic. The two clubs discussed below, one from an urban area and one from a rural area have been selected to provide a more detailed insight into the process of policy implementation.

6.2.1 Boxing Town Club

Boxing Town Club (BTC) is located in an urban area which according to the most recent Office for National Statistics Census data the town has an estimated population of 212,000. BTC was established in 2004 and, at the time of writing, had approximately 80 members of which 65-70 are 'active members' (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15). At the start of 2015 the club restructured and formed a new committee. Eight individuals covered roles that include a treasurer, secretary, welfare officer, and regular committee members. There are four male and four female committee members – two of the female committee members are the head coach's daughters.

⁵⁶ <http://www.englandboxing.org/aba/index.cfm/about-us/regional-associations/> (Accessed 17.02.16)

⁵⁷ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/news/aiba-technical-rules-some-frequently-asked-questions/> (Accessed 17.02.16)

⁵⁸ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/about-us/> (Accessed 07.02.15)

The club holds training sessions every day of the week. Boxing training on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday plus fitness classes on the other days of the week and a children's self defence class on a Saturday morning. The club was awarded *Clubmark* status in May 2015.

6.2.2 Small Town Boxing Club

Small Town Boxing Club (STBC) is located in an industrial estate on the outskirts of Small Town, which has an estimated population of 72,000. SBTC was formed in July 2010 and, as of April 2015; the club had approximately 55 members. SBTC has eight committee members that include roles, such as, treasurer, secretary and welfare officer. There are six coaches. The club has training sessions five nights a week, Monday to Friday. The club was first awarded *Clubmark* in June 2014.

Although STBC has eight committee members, the following quote highlights one of the many difficulties EB have faced when getting clubs to work effectively towards achieving the *Clubmark* accreditation standard, "my name's [Interviewee BAR] and I have the role of chairman, coach, cleaner, and caretaker" (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15). Clearly, with a club so reliant on one individual, it may be a burdensome task, or difficult for them to spread the workload, to gather and prepare the *Clubmark* criteria evidence. Furthermore, there is a greater likelihood of sustainability issues with the club if that particular individual suddenly became unavailable. As will be seen EB have attempted to move away from this 'one-man-band' club set up. This is the first indication of the important role that club members (the low level policy actors) have in the process of implementation (Lipsky, 1980), and without adequate time and sufficient resources available to the programme (*Clubmark*) then there is an increased probability of implementation failure (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984). Having said that, the chairman/coach of STBC did allocate elements of workload and decision-making within the committee. So, he was not entirely representative of the 'one-man band' (one individual with sole responsibility of a club) set up, as this quote signifies, "I have a lot of overall say in the club and make decisions but with big decisions I will take it to committee." (Interviewee BBA, 23.04.15)

6.3 England Boxing's *Clubmark*

As a response to Sport England's introduction of the *Clubmark* quality assurance framework the ABAE, as EB was then known, produced the *ABAE Health and Safety*

Standards in Clubs document⁵⁹, which was published on 22nd February 2003. Although Sport England's *Clubmark* was established in 2002 EB did not introduce *Clubmark* accreditation into the sport until 2008. There was no strong evidence to suggest that this was due to resistance from the NGB. Instead of adopting SE's framework, amendments to the *Health and Safety Standards* document were gradually introduced to reflect items of the *Clubmark* process (EB officer email correspondence, 18.04.16). This was EB's strategy of coping with the limited manpower within the organisation to develop a boxing-specific version of *Clubmark* and the associated guidance documentation. However, EB did manage to form a *Clubmark* sub-committee consisting of 10 individuals to develop a *Clubmark* resource document. The comprehensive 102-page ABAE *Clubmark* Resource Pack (ABAE, 2010a) was published in 2010, which set out and explained the key issues that boxing clubs had to address, and which identified the core criteria that had to be satisfied in order to gain the *Clubmark* accreditation.

While the sub-committee were preparing the guidance Resource Pack a BDO/CSO set about the task of tailoring the generic SE *Clubmark* framework to the sport of boxing. The basic tailoring involved adding the ABAE's logo and boxing terminology to the original SE documentation. As will be seen in the subsequent two case studies these alterations were much more limited than the alterations that the swimming and rugby union NGBs made to the generic SE *Clubmark* framework.

The ABAE suggested that the *Clubmark* Resource pack provided a single, national standard for ABAE *Clubmark* accreditation, which would give all boxing clubs a structure and direction and provide significant benefits for clubs. The specified benefits listed in the Resource Pack are displayed in the first column of Table 6.1. The information in the table shows that some of the original benefits (such as 'increased membership') have experienced a watering down of the language used. For example, the more recent recommended benefits of achieving *Clubmark* accreditation (see the second column of Table 6.1) suggested that *Clubmark* "will assist you to have strategies for recruitment of new members" and that the framework "provides a solid foundation for all clubs wishing to grow", rather than stating the previous bold claims. The likelihood is that this is evidence of EB gradually developing knowledge, creating a greater understanding of the engagement levels of its club members.

⁵⁹ http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/assets/file/clubmark/clubmark_resource_pack_-_jan_2010_tcm97-171404.doc. (Accessed 17.02.16)

Table 6.1 Boxing's Clubmark benefits

ABAE 2010 <i>Clubmark</i> resource pack	EB website <i>Clubmark</i> section 2015 ⁶⁰
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of your club - Once accredited, your club will be listed on a national database and in other sporting directories, which will help you attract new members and to grow. • Increased membership - the fact that ABAE Clubmark accreditation is a nationally recognized endorsement from the ABAE and Sport England demonstrates to parents that your club is committed to providing a safe, effective and child friendly environment. • Developing your club - the foundation for any club is its youth structure. So, by encouraging and attracting young members, you are building a stronger and more sustainable future for your club. • Resources - to support the delivery of regular programmes of structured coaching sessions for all boxers. • Training opportunities - for coaches, club officials and other volunteers. • Support from your regional coaching or development officer - to assist your club in focusing on its needs, accessing funding, sharing ideas and implementing best practice. • Creation of partnerships - between your club and local authorities (Community Sports Networks), County Sports Partnerships, schools and, of course, the ABAE to ensure your club has the support it requires. • Quality Coaching - having structured activities and a regular programme of competition will improve the experience of everyone involved. • Possible financial savings - many local authorities recognise the benefits of Clubmark and offer discounts on facility hire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of clear goals and objectives can be communicated to all club members and the wider community. This highlights the club's focus and ambition for the future and provides a solid foundation for all clubs wishing to grow • The analysis of the current workforce ensures all training is up to date and the club is operating at its best • Adopting more organised systems and structures will help the club run more efficiently and effectively addressing issues such as equity and child protection should increase parents confidence when choosing the correct club for their child • Updating policies, training and systems shows confidence and increased productivity. This in turn attracts schools and local authorities that must ensure quality and child friendly systems and procedures • Clubmark will assist you to have strategies for recruitment of new members • Some leisure operators and local authorities may give priority and at times discount to Clubmark accredited clubs • Clubmark provides recognition for high quality clubs • Members can be sure their club is a well-managed club, striving to offer the best in coaching and sports development • There are tangible benefits such as access to the Active Kids scheme where clubs can apply for equipment

It is also worth highlighting that since the ABAE/EB rebranding a *Clubmark* resource page was created on the website, which provided links to 24 Microsoft Word template documents that could be modified by clubs.⁶¹ This allowed for any minor alterations or template additions to be quickly updated and uploaded to the webpage by EB. In the foreword of the Resource Pack (and Appendix 1 of the pack) there were clear statements explaining that once a club had achieved *Clubmark* accreditation status, it was entirely a club's responsibility to ensure appropriate (safety) standards continued to be maintained:

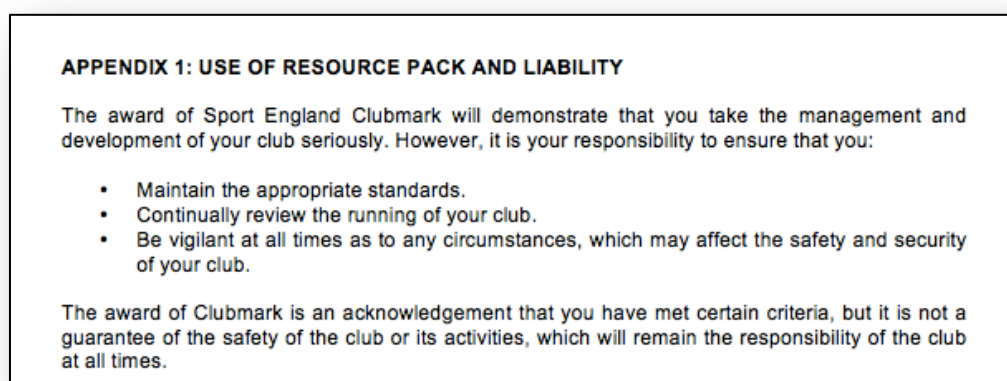
We hope that your club finds the ABAE Resource Pack a valuable tool as it works towards *Clubmark* accreditation and we wish you success in your endeavours to achieve this quality standard. ABAE has taken great care in the preparation of this Resource Pack and in the incorporation of *Clubmark* criteria, however the safety at your club and the conduct of your

⁶⁰ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/clubs/clubmark/> (Accessed 05.12.15)

⁶¹ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/clubs/useful-templates/> (Accessed 05.12.15)

activities remain entirely your responsibility; please read the notice in Appendix 1. (p. 5 of the January 2010 Resource Pack)

Appendix 1 of Resource Pack provided an explanation of how the resource should be used (See Figure 6.1) and includes another clear statement (from SE's generic documentation), which reiterated to users that it is their responsibility, not that of EB, to maintain standards once accreditation had been achieved.



Source: page 95 of Resource pack

Figure 6.1 Resource Pack user information

With this type of prescriptive language EB are subscribing to a classic top-down approach to implementation. National expectations are clearly stated and once the low-level policy actors (club members) become involved in the process, the accountability is passed on to the clubs.

When the ABAE first introduced the *Clubmark* framework in 2008 it was not made a requirement that clubs had to work towards the accreditation. However, the NGB had agreed a *Clubmark* target with SE, which was in the ABAE's 2009-2012 WSP. Including targets for a certain number of clubs achieving *Clubmark* became problematic, as this EB official explained:

When I first came to England Boxing there was a target of 50 clubs [to achieve *Clubmark* accreditation] and I heard conversations along the lines of "Oh, we need to get another three *Clubmarked*", which was not right. (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

A new ABAE chief executive officer (CEO) was appointed in May 2011 whose responsibility was to devise, deliver and manage the overall strategy for the NGB, which

included implementation of *Clubmark*. There was recognition of the issues brought about by setting targets for a certain number of clubs achieving *Clubmark* status, so a team of senior EB officials altered the implementation strategy:

We were [held accountable for the number of clubs achieving *Clubmark*]. We'd made a commitment in our previous Whole Sport Plan. That is not in our plan for this cycle. Otherwise, it becomes a numbers game. You know, "we need to do another four clubs this year to reach our target", rather than providing appropriate services for the clubs. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

As this comment indicates, the target for the number of *Clubmark* accredited clubs was removed from the 2013-2017 WSP, which was a welcome relief to one EB official, "previously, we've had a quota to achieve *Clubmark* but we don't now and I'm far happier with that. We're no longer pushing, twisting their arm for a club to get accredited" (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14). The deliberate removal of *Clubmark* targets suggests that EB were more concerned about the quality and outcomes of the policy (benefits to clubs when using the framework), rather than achieving implementation success. Additionally, as a consequence of removing the target, EB no longer had to coerce clubs (who might not be interested) in to working towards achieving the accreditation standard. EB now adopted a more pragmatic approach:

If it is an appropriate qualification, at an appropriate time for a club, then we would like to see a club work towards obtaining *Clubmark*. Not all clubs are at a point where it is a meaningful exercise for them. We wouldn't be prescriptive and say, "all clubs must achieve *Clubmark*" If it's not appropriate right now, let's find what the appropriate support is you need right now and ensure we provide that service.

(Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

This is a really important point that reiterates how flexible EB were (and were allowed to be by SE) with the *Clubmark* implementation strategy. EB adapting their strategy (of no longer pressuring clubs to go through the process to hit the target with the removal from the WSP), as a result of the development of their knowledge, can be explained in terms of Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict model. When *Clubmark* targets were set for EB the type of strategy was *political* implementation; clearly defined goals (low ambiguity) but which were often incompatible with the capacity and interests of boxing clubs resulted in high conflict. There was no suggestion that EB did not achieve the targets, which indicates that the implementation outcomes were decided by the power at the national (the NGB). For those clubs that refused there were clubs that refused to work towards *Clubmark*,

then, for them, the process would be *symbolic* implementation due to the fact the strength of local level policy actors determined the outcome.

6.3.1 *Clubmark* accreditation process

Any club affiliated to EB can apply to work towards achieving *Clubmark* accreditation by contacting their CSO (or CSP). However, the affiliation process has been found to be somewhat disorganised, which has resulted in some clubs not being affiliated and, consequently, not able to officially work towards the *Clubmark* standard.

6.3.1.1 Regional associations

There are 11 boxing regional associations, within the nine SE defined regions. Each regional association has a regional registrar and secretary⁶². An issue identified by EB in the degree of variation in how registrars and/or secretaries approach certain responsibilities, which had resulted with inconsistencies between regions. EB have recognised this issue, as this senior EB official explained:

Some [registrars and secretaries] will be very strict and some will be less strict. So, over the last three years we've tried, as a national governing body, to make that a national, consistent, transparent process. If you are registering a club in the north of the country, it will be exactly the same as a club in the south of the country. People should be paying the same fees and following the same protocols. It's very difficult when you have 11 regional secretaries – volunteers – who can interpret rules and regulations differently. As a NGB we are trying to ensure more consistency in that process. (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

This comment highlights how the interpretations of street-level bureaucrats can affect implementation of *Clubmark*. In April 2014 there were 136 EB-affiliated clubs in the region and four clubs in process of becoming affiliated (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). The way in which a club became affiliated was through submission of an application to their regional association, not directly to EB. Herein lies a problem; the affiliation decision was often not based on the quality of the organisational structure of the proposed club, or the (potential) success and sustainability of the club. Rather, it was, according to one EB official, frequently a case of “if your face fits you'll become affiliated!! Jobs for the boys!” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). Although EB planned to tackle the issue of regional inconsistencies with the introduction of a national affiliation process, the NGB recognised that an element of local knowledge was still required to ensure transparency and fairness

⁶² <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/about-us/regional-associations/> (Accessed 18.04.16)

in the process. For example, EB hoped that there were no more cases of, “he pinched a boxer from us 10 years ago, I don’t like him, and so I won’t affiliate his club!” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15).

Further evidence of attempts to limit the affiliation inconsistencies came from the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) EB held in November 2013 in which it was decided that some of the regional secretaries’ responsibilities were withdrawn, as this senior EB official explained:

We took away a bit of the power the regional secretaries had, where they used to be quite autonomous, and we put the power into the constituent clubs. So, now in England Boxing’s constitution we are now far more responsible to our 900 members, rather than 11 regional secretaries. There is talk of trying to set up a central registration process, rather than through the regions, but that will have to be very carefully thought out. (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

This demonstrates that although EB knew of the affiliation issue (preventing some clubs from working towards *Clubmark*) and clubs in support of a more transparent process, the organisation did not yet have a precise policy solution. This fits with Matland’s (1995) *experimental* implementation (high policy ambiguity, low policy conflict), which, in decision-making terms, closely parallels a “garbage can” process (Cohen et al., 1972) and Kingdon’s (1997) Multiple Streams model. Furthermore, this is a good example of Lukes’ (1974) first and second faces of power; EB dictated the situation (in setting the agenda and dictating the alterations to the secretaries’ responsibilities) at the EGM.

6.3.1.2 *Clubmark* accreditation procedure

Although any EB-affiliated club can apply to work towards achieving *Clubmark*, the CSO in the region had never experienced a club being pro-active; it was always the CSO recommending *Clubmark* to club members (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). One of the members of STBC explained:

The first I’d heard about *Clubmark* was from another club – they told me “don’t waste your time” as they’d been through a year of hell and they said they didn’t have any benefits...next time I heard anything was when England Boxing brought in the Club Support Officer role” (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

Although this was not a great introduction to *Clubmark* the club member continued:

The next I heard of *Clubmark* was when the Club Support Officer mentioned it...sent over the criteria of what we need, and turned out we had everything...since day one when we started...We had safeguarding, equality policies, a constitution and stuff like that. I thought most clubs would have that but turns out they don't! We actually found the process easy! (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

In fact, both clubs in this case study found the accreditation process relatively straightforward. The coach of STBC proudly stated, “we opened the club with everything in place; safeguarding, constitution and everything like that. I’m surprised some clubs take a year to get *Clubmark*. (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

From the interview data with EB officials it appeared that STBC (and BTC, once the new committee was formed) were untypical insofar as they found the process relatively unproblematic. One EB official noted, “the majority of feedback we receive is how onerous and challenging the [*Clubmark* accreditation] process is” (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14).

In an effort to assist a club when first becoming involved in the *Clubmark* process EB produced a colour-coordinated flow chart for club members to use as a reference (see Figure 6.2). The *Clubmark* process flowchart is simple, straightforward and has colour coordinated boxes, which clearly identified who is responsible for each part of the process, and highlighted the resources available to the clubs. Producing a process flowchart is an action that matches Hogwood and Gunn (1984) eighth condition for perfect implementation; that tasks are fully specified in the correct sequence.

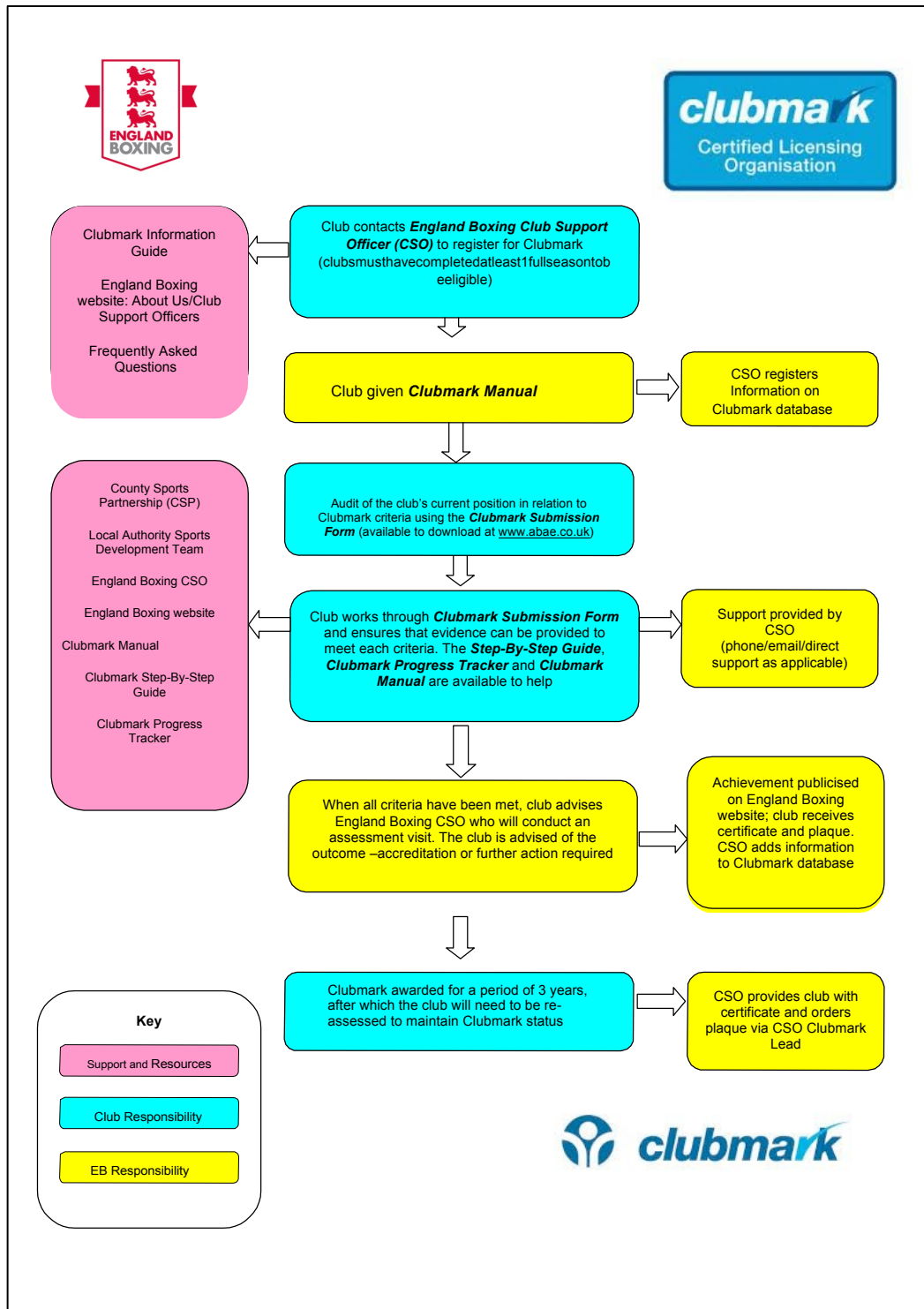


Figure 6.2 EB Clubmark process flow chart

Interestingly, the first resource specified on the flowchart is a CSP officer; a CSO is only listed third in the list, after Local Authority Sports Development Team. This contradicts another of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) conditions that dependency relationships should be minimal. They argue that a single implementing agency greatly increases the chances of perfect implementation. In this case, EB suggest that clubs seek out alternative support

(reiterated in the second box of EB's *Clubmark* step-by-step flow chart. See Figure 6.3) before club members should approach CSOs. As will become apparent in the swimming chapter, this is a contrasting approach to that of the ASA. Furthermore, the ASA only allow ASA officials to sign off a *Clubmark* application, whereas EB allow CSP officers to sign off a *Clubmark* application, as one CSP officer present at BTC commented, "we [the CSP] could've signed off boxing's *Clubmark* if the CSO wasn't as involved with this club" (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15).

The first thing EB generally did was to send a pro forma to a club, which mainly explained the details and requirements of *Clubmark* (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). Once a club had an adequate understanding of the requirements a hard copy *Clubmark* pack was presented to the club. When a club received the ***Clubmark Resource Pack (manual)*** the club could start auditing its position in relation to the *Clubmark* criteria by following the ***Clubmark Submission Form*** for guidance. Additional guidance was available in the 16-point ***Step-By-Step guide*** (see Figure 6.3) produced by EB (England Boxing, 2013). The evidence suggested that the process illustrated in Figure 6.2 was generally followed with the exception of some of the responsibilities – CSOs tended to recommend *Clubmark* to clubs, rather than the clubs contacting CSOs, and, as this chapter will highlight, CSOs often assisted clubs to a greater degree than was originally intended.

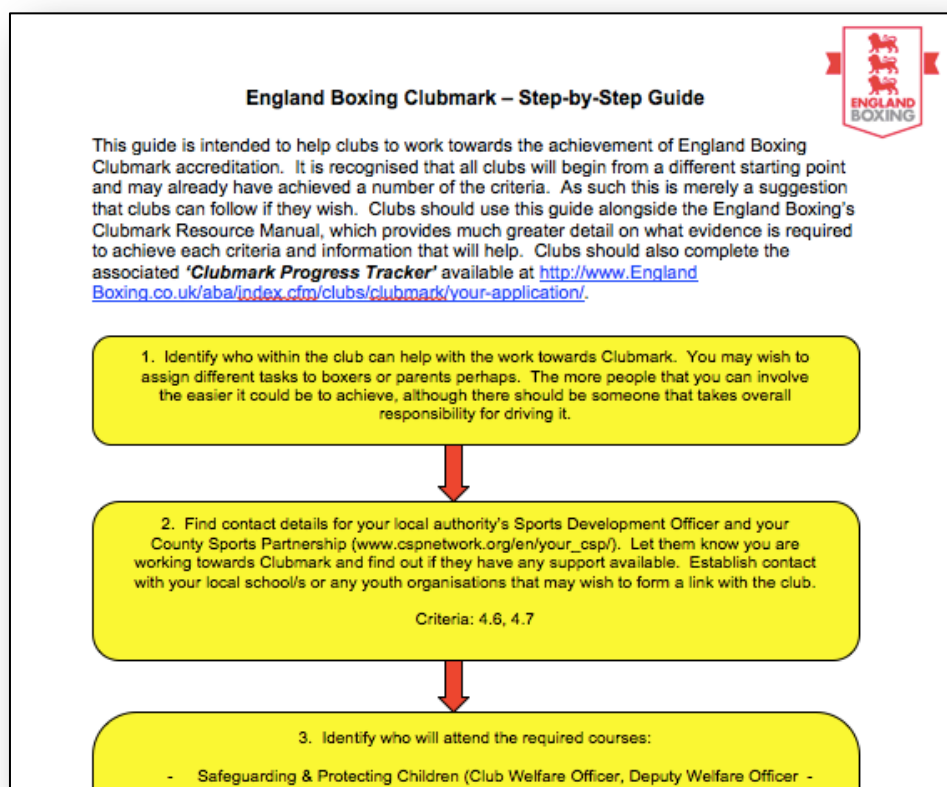


Figure 6.3 EB Clubmark step-by-step guide flow chart

For the sport of boxing, CSP officers and LA officers heavily supported both clubs through the *Clubmark* process. STBC already had a relationship with the council's Leisure Services officer so continued to receive their support, in addition to the CSO support. Primarily, the local CSP officer guided BTC through the process but the CSO also provided direction and information for the club. This demonstrates the crucial role of external agencies for the successful implementation of EB's *Clubmark*.

To work through the criteria the members of BTC apportioned certain tasks amongst the committee to collate the *Clubmark* evidence (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15). In addition to allocating certain tasks to the various BTC committee members, the club astutely created their committee prior to working towards *Clubmark* in the hope of becoming a sustainable club. The club treasurer described how they assigned tasks to certain committee members:

Because of my day-to-day job [a financial advisor and mortgage broker] I understand the documentation from the NGB and understand why they're asking us to do certain things. Being compliant gives your customers and us protection. So, here parents will know that the children and the club will be protected... [Another committee member] is a PA

[Personal Assistant] to a Chief Executive of a large company so she's fairly familiar with compliance rolls and organisational requirements. As is [another committee member], she's employed by a large legal practice so has understanding of legal requirements and compliance too (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15)

Once a club believes they have collected all of the evidence contact is made with the CSO who arranges an assessment meeting. If the club provides all of the *Clubmark* evidence in a folder it only takes the CSO approximately 30 minutes to check through. However, this is very rarely the case, as this officer explained:

Some clubs might have a safeguarding policy pinned to the wall but they wouldn't give that a second thought so that's pointless. We need to sit with them and make sure they understand and actually adopt the policies. That's the time-consuming bit. I'll say "right, this is a constitution. This is the legal part. These are the types of things you'll use it for and this is the information that needs to be in it" (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

By dictating to clubs what it was that they had to do and setting the plan of action (agenda) for the clubs to follow corresponds to Lukes' (1974) first face of power. The CSO explained that once the club members had been told what to do, more often than not, they did as instructed. However, the CSO did sometimes encounter implementation issues as highlighted throughout this chapter.

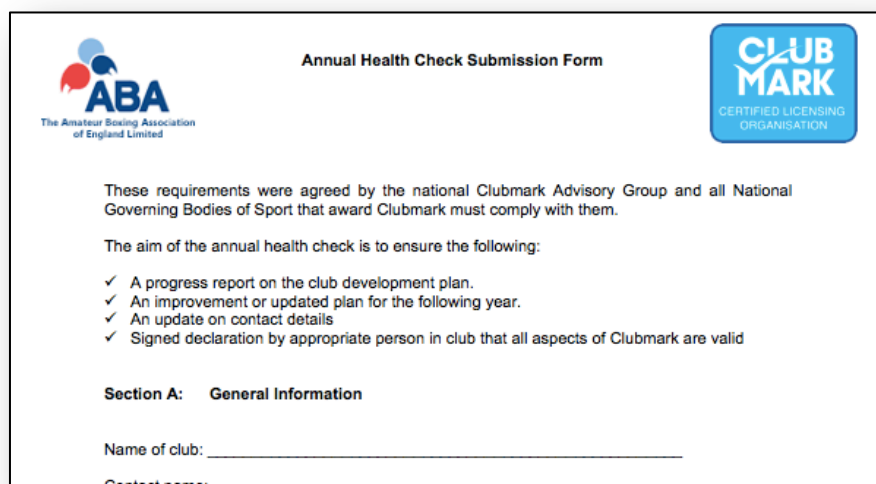
6.3.1.3 *Clubmark* Annual Health Check

The annual Health Check (AHC) is not compulsory and is not formally assessed, but it is recommended by SE to help a club to maintain the high standards demonstrated when *Clubmark* was achieved. The checklist highlights areas a club should examine to ensure practices and standards are being sustained.

Although the NGBs for swimming and rugby incorporated the AHC as a requisit for retaining the *Clubmark* accreditation this was not the case with EB. The decision was taken by the *Clubmark* national lead CSO not to incorporate an annual formalised assessment. The CSO explained that the decision was based on EB "lacking the resource to chase clubs up for the health check; if it wasn't something that we were able to adequately resource/support/chase up, then I didn't feel it could be a compulsory requirement" (CSO email correspondence, 18.04.16).

This observation resonates with two of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) conditions for perfect implementation: first that adequate time and sufficient resources are available (condition two), and second that resources are actually available so there is no disruption to the process (condition three). When applying top-down implementation theory the focus is generally on whether national management have ensured that low-level policy actors (the street-level bureaucrats/club volunteers) have adequate resources. Therefore, it was an astute move, by the CSO, to recognise the potential issues (a lack of EB capacity) that could ensue if the AHC became a formalised process, rather than a suggested best practice task. Consequently, the recognition of resource constraints by EB is an important decision for the continued success of the *Clubmark* implementation process.

The decision not make the AHC a compulsory requirement would have been informed by the knowledge and experience EB officials. Each EB official interviewed recognised the fact that club members were very rarely, if ever, pro-active in embarking on the *Clubmark* process: it was always a CSO (or CSP officer) recommending to a club that they should commence working towards *Clubmark*. Nonetheless, document analysis uncovered that an Annual Health Check Submission Form (England Boxing, 2010) had been produced (see Figure 6.4). This seven page document was designed to be completed, with supporting evidence and posted to the NGB's offices.



The image shows the top section of a form titled "Annual Health Check Submission Form". It features the logos for the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) and Clubmark. The text explains that the requirements were agreed by the national Clubmark Advisory Group and all National Governing Bodies of Sport. It states the aim of the annual health check is to ensure the following:

- ✓ A progress report on the club development plan.
- ✓ An improvement or updated plan for the following year.
- ✓ An update on contact details
- ✓ Signed declaration by appropriate person in club that all aspects of Clubmark are valid

Section A: General Information

Name of club: _____

Contact name: _____

Figure 6.4 Top section of the ABAE *Clubmark* AHC Submission Form

Although the first sentence of the AHC Submission Form is prescriptive, the ABAE/EB have displayed flexibility with the implementation strategy. It is probable (although it was

not possible to confirm this) that the majority of clubs did not comply with collecting evidence for the AHC, it was difficult and time-consuming to physically post the file to the ABAE (likely to be as a result of lacking capacity and resources), and that the NGB did not have sufficient capacity and resources to pursue clubs for the AHC evidence. Therefore, the AHC Submission Form procedure was quietly abandoned.

Another point, which contrasts the two subsequent case studies, is that in addition to EB not obligating clubs to complete the AHC, one of the CSOs interviewed had never been involved in reaccrediting clubs with a lapsed *Clubmark* status, “we don’t follow up to check what clubs are doing once they’ve achieved *Clubmark*” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). Although the CSO, who had been in post for two years, had not been involved with, or asked to process, a *Clubmark* renewal, they had heard of three clubs who were reaccredited once their four-year *Clubmark* accreditation status had expired. Inspecting the EB website⁶³ there were two clubs in the region whose *Clubmark* accreditation had expired in 2014 and 2015. Given the fact the CSO had not been involved with the reaccreditation process, this is further evidence of the lack of proaction from club members.

6.3.2 *Clubmark* amendments

As will be seen in the next two chapters, unlike the tailored *Clubmark* frameworks adopted by the swimming and rugby union NGBs, EB used the generic SE framework, which received very little modification. When *Clubmark* was introduced in January 2008 one of the BDOs was tasked with tailoring the generic SE framework by simply amending the wording of the document to make it boxing-specific and adding the NGB’s logo.

One of the first significant alterations to the generic framework was to develop the procedure for submission (and the assessment) in an attempt to make the process as ‘club-friendly’ as possible. The primary change was modifying the submission process by developing a Submission Form (England Boxing, 2010) that meant clubs did not have to submit a weighty file of paperwork. The onus was then placed on the assessor to visit the club and physically check the necessary paperwork. Figure 6.5 illustrates the simple layout of the form⁶⁴. It listed the criteria and evidence in tabular format with additional boxes for the club members to tick indicating that each criterion had been satisfied, and a

⁶³ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/clubs/clubmark/clubmark-accredited-clubs/> (Accessed 06.12.15)

⁶⁴ The EB *Clubmark* Submission Form was virtually identical to the ABA version. The logo was updated and England Boxing replaced all ABAE references

box for the assessor to sign for verification. Throughout the form there are sections for the assessor to state any outstanding actions from each of the main *Clubmark* sections. Therefore, EB simplified the submission process by introducing a box-ticking format for club members to complete.

One boxing club was selected as a pilot club to test the amended submission process. That club achieved *Clubmark* accreditation status in February 2008 (CDO email correspondence, 18.04.16). Even though the pilot club successfully completed the simplified process, as mentioned previously, the majority of feedback EB officials continued to receive was how onerous and challenging the process was (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14).

Criteria No.	Criteria	Evidence	Complete? (Club)	Verified (EB)
C2.6	Do all of your coaches hold appropriate professional indemnity & public liability insurance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-declaration ▪ England Boxing database / registration 		
C2.7	Does your club use safe and appropriate venues and equipment for all coaching and competition sessions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completed risk assessment 		

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS
Assessor to use this box to summarise any outstanding actions from this section

Figure 6.5 A portion of EB's *Clubmark* Submission Form

A senior EB official explained another, important, modification to the format of the generic SE framework: “[The BDO/CSO] did a good job in making *Clubmark* less academic and bureaucratic, and that helped some clubs go through the process.” However, the official then identified an on-going issue with the documentation, “but I still think there’s quite a lot in there our clubs don’t understand. For example, some clubs, even with it being relevant to boxing, found the framework quite wordy, weighty tomes!” (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14). This is an issue for EB. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggested that without a

clear understanding of, and agreement on, objectives then implementation difficulties would occur. Section 6.6 highlights a number of ways EB have attempted to ensure clubs understood the requirements to enable them to complete the *Clubmark* process.

The only other amendments to the EB *Clubmark* framework criteria were minor tweaks based on changes that were made by the *Clubmark* license holder of the time, KKP; the main wording alteration was that the 'Sports Equity & Ethics' section became 'Knowing Your Club & Its Community' section (CDO email correspondence, 18.04.16). There were no other major alterations to EB's *Clubmark* framework (or EB's Resource Pack). However, *Clubmark's* new license holder, PwC, completed a review of *Clubmark* (as discussed in Chapter 5) and was in the process of updating the criteria and standardising procedure. The fundamental change involved developing an online portal that all sport clubs would have to adopt. This information was communicated from SE to EB's national *Clubmark* lead CDO who was informed that the system was to go live in May 2016. The CDO explained, "all clubs will go through this portal and the NGB lead (me for England Boxing) will be advised of a [boxing] club's application and we will allocate support as necessary. We will communicate this new information by updating the website, via email, and social media etc." (CDO email correspondence, 18.04.16)

6.3.3 Templates

Templates were written by EB to assist clubs with producing development plans, policies, and best practice procedures, which were attached as appendices in the Resource Pack. The Resource Pack was often sent to club members via email or accessed via the ABAE/EB website. The templates were saved in a Microsoft Word format so that they could be adopted, adapted or developed to suit the needs of individual clubs. On page 49 of the Resource Pack there were clear instructions for clubs to follow:

To insert information specific to your club in the templates, simply fill in the blank spaces, or replace any words that are in *ITALICISED CAPITAL LETTERS*, with the appropriate information in any text style. Text can also be added to the existing material. (p. 49)

Every template was comprehensive, and contained all information required to satisfy the *Clubmark* criteria. With this quantity of detailed information available, combined with CSO/CSP support, EB had ensured that there was abundant information communicated, and that there was understanding of, and agreement on, objectives, which would satisfy two of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) conditions for perfect implementation. Often, official objectives are poorly understood, sometimes due to top-down communication from

headquarters being inadequate. This did not appear to be the case in this boxing case study. However, data revealed that not every club going through the *Clubmark* accreditation process would receive a standardised level of guidance documentation. For example, a club supported by this particular CSP officer would receive slightly different guidance documentation compared with a club solely supported by a CSO:

It was an amalgamation of the CSP templates, Sport England Club Matters (the new website where *Clubmark* has been moved) and ABAE/England Boxing documents. I gave this club [BTC] a memory stick with all this information and said “there you go, there’s all the info” and let them take it all in. (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15)

Clearly, offering some clubs a wider variety of sources of advice, could potentially lead to greater scope for interpretation of the policy by the street-level actors, particularly as there is no formal process in place to ensure CSOs and CSP officers deliver a comparable level of support. Although using an amalgamation of resources could potentially dilute (or result in poorly understood) official policy objectives, there was no evidence from the interviews with national and regional officers or from data from the two clubs that this was the case.

In fact, STBC developed much of their own documentation prior to the introduction of *Clubmark* material:

We didn’t use *Clubmark* membership templates. I just did a Google search and found a template and reworded it to suit our club. We’ve been using them for about three years, before I’d heard of *Clubmark*. Other policies I’ve wrote out between me and the Leisure Services (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

EB did not pressure STBC to adopt the EB *Clubmark* templates when checking their evidence; as long as the methods adopted satisfied the criteria EB were willing to give approval.

The EB website was updated during the 2013 EB rebranding exercise and a dedicated *Clubmark* section was created. The *Clubmark* section contained links to a long list of document templates, which could be used to help guide clubs through the accreditation process. The website stated that the “templates will help you ensure your club meets *Clubmark* criteria”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/clubs/clubmark/useful-templates/> (Accessed 23.11.15)

6.4 England Boxing's Development Team

CSOs were introduced during the 2013 ABAE/EB rebranding. The role of a CSO is to offer clubs assistance with daily challenges, such as: facility issues, lease arrangements, recruiting and training volunteers, finance, funding, marketing and *Clubmark*⁶⁶. The contextual setting of each club varies considerably, which leads to a range of issues that clubs must deal with, as this EB official explained, “very few of the 900 clubs own their own premises – unlike rugby clubs who have a bit of real estate – so, there’s no security of tenure. Six, nine, 12-month leases. So, the [Development] team will, very successfully, spend a lot of time helping clubs secure grants to make them sustainable (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14). As the evidence suggested, clubs with *Clubmark* accreditation status had a greater probability of being successful recipients of grants in comparison with non-*Clubmark* accredited clubs. The evidence suggested that this appeared to be the main driver for clubs working towards *Clubmark*. Furthermore, EB recognised how some LAs were prejudiced against non-*Clubmark* accredited clubs as this EB official explained, “we need to remember that some Local Authorities give preferential treatment to clubs who have got *Clubmark*. It’s an external motivation.” (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

The introduction of the CSO role was welcomed by the two clubs in this study. The role certainly increased the NGB’s ability to offer club support and raised the awareness of *Clubmark*, as this member of STBC explained:

[There was] no ABA support before the CSO came on board and I hadn’t heard of it [Clubmark] until I met the CSO. The CSO often sends out ideas of what’s going around, for grants and stuff from the ABA. There now seems to be certainly more of a link and have contact by telephone, email, visits. (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

Hogwood and Gunn (1984) argued that the longer the chain of causality (implementation stages), the greater the risk of objectives being poorly understood. With the direct link to EB for the clubs through the CSOs, consistency in the communication of objectives was significantly increased.

⁶⁶ <http://www.abae.co.uk/Aba/index.cfm/about-us/club-support-officers1/> (Accessed 14.08.15)

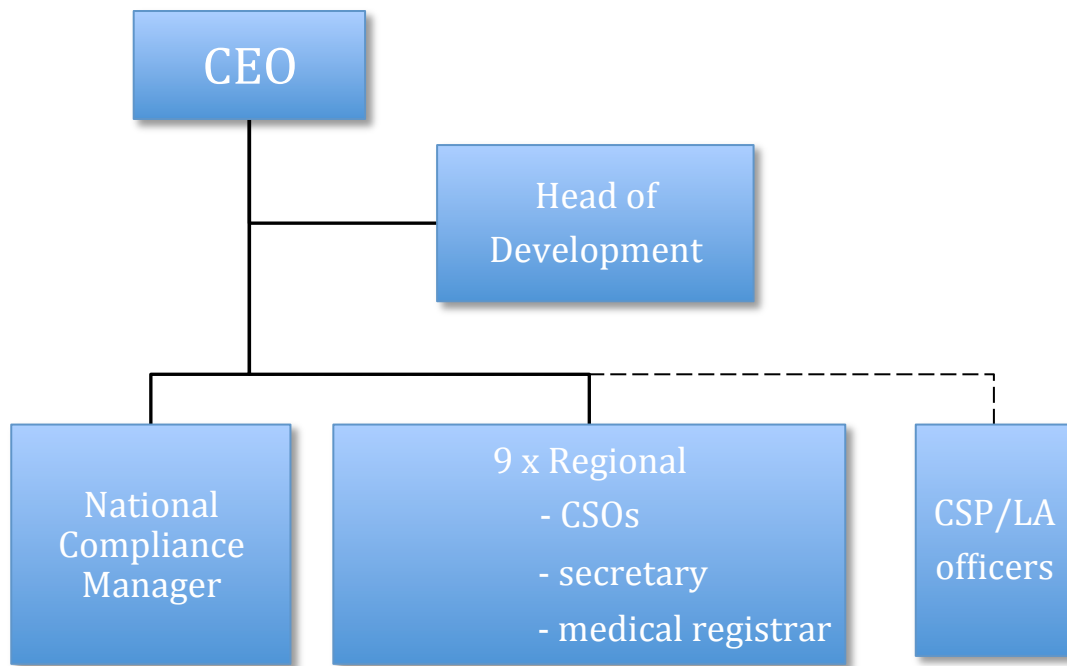


Figure 6.6 EB Club Development structure and the additional club support

EB communicated with its members through a number of channels. The main method was via the EB website. Information was also passed through the regional networks of administrators, volunteers and CSOs. Additionally, EB communicated through the volunteer workforce that was being trained and up-skilled. A senior EB official explained why so many channels were used:

It's the nature of the organisation; names change, phone numbers and email addresses change. It's responding to the informal organisation structure. We don't have clean organisation channels like you would have in a commercial enterprise. So, we send information through as many channels as possible. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

One BTC member explained the means by which they received information, "the CSO, the CSP officer, and colleagues of the CSP officer gave us *Clubmark* documentation, which was often by email." (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15). There was no formalised approach to how CSOs communicated with clubs. The CSO was asked which methods they engaged with clubs:

Phone is massive. But it depends who you want to speak to. If it's the coach, 99 per cent of the time it'll be by phone. Email is also used a lot, and through our England Boxing website. That's been a massive tool. Having that regularly updated, with things like rule changes...that's saved us a lot of time. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

Although, since 2013, EB had considerably increased the level of club support, the nine CSO positions were only funded until the end of March 2016. At the end of 2015 there was no clear job security; CSOs were faced with possible redundancy, which led to some officers seeking other employment. SE agreed to fund a reduced CSO team of five full-time and two part-time staff for an additional year until the end of March 2017 (the current WSP funding cycle). As a consequence, it was planned that the reduced team had to work with each other to cover the areas lacking a CSO. The CSOs structure their work in “priorities, and smarter working.” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). However, this reduction raises questions of whether EB would have the capacity to continue offering clubs adequate support.

6.5 Role of CSP officers

Unlike the sport of swimming, boxing is heavily reliant on the support of CSPs to support boxing clubs. They liaise with the CSO to offer support to affiliated clubs (see Figure 6.6). The CSP officer interviewed helped administer 13 sports but most of his time was spent in boxing clubs working on club development. This is how he perceived his role, “I am a local liaison officer, I communicate loads with the CSO. I guess I’m the link between NGBs and clubs.” (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15)

This particular CSP officer was heavily involved in supporting boxing clubs, especially BTC, through the *Clubmark* process. As seen on the EB *Clubmark* process flowchart EB recommend that boxing clubs should make contact with their local CSP officer, as this EB officer explained:

We encourage clubs to work with their CSPs because they have the access to lots of mass participation events and can help clubs with their marketing and putting them in contact with new participants. CSPs are also on local panels where decisions are made with regards to funding allocation. Clubs would not have the opportunity if they do not have a relationship with their CSP (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

This comment demonstrates the recognition by EB regarding to the lack of club support that the NGB could provide. Although the implementation literature (see Hogwood & Gunn, 1984) suggests that the number of implementing agents should be kept to a minimum, involving other agents (CSP officers, or LA officers) succeeded for the sport of boxing and is important for successful implementation of *Clubmark*. Furthermore, the quote demonstrates that EB officials understood the importance of the street-level policy actors (Lipsky, 1980) in the process of implementation, particularly with the advantage of CSP local

knowledge. If a policy is located in the experimental implementation paradigm (Matland, 1995), then the central principle is that contextual conditions dominate the process. Outcomes are contingent on the available resources and actors involved in the local environment.

CSP officer involvement in the *Clubmark* process was not just seen as beneficial from a top-down perspective, empirical evidence revealed that club members found CSP officer support essential. During an interview with a CSP officer he explained his involvement with BTC, “BTC approached us to talk about *Clubmark*. They talked to the regional CSO and were then directed to us for support. I helped guide them through the *Clubmark* process” (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15). The CSP officer went on to describe the procedure of working with the club:

They’d [the BTC club members] then work through section by section. Then, I’d look at it, the RDO [the CSP Regional Development Officer] would, and the CSO would look. We’d make sure the club understood what was required and break it down to make it manageable for the clubs” (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15).

This comment also reveals the level of involvement of the CSP officer during the process, and how the various bodies work along side each other to check evidence and progress. It is important to note that the role of CSP officers varies between sports, “we find a lot of our work with boxing clubs is help around Inspired Facilities bids, which are Sport England grants. We tend to have facilities and funding targets with boxing whereas with bowls, for example, we focus on participation targets. It varies per sport” (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15). Due to the fact that CSP officer targets in the sport of boxing are focused on facilities and funding, it is in their interest to successfully guide clubs through the *Clubmark* process to improve the success rate of funding and facilities grant applications. EB supported this approach due to the fact that many club facilities are often hard to find, located in dimly lit streets and not particularly inviting. One EB official suggested, “we want them in lighter areas and to be more neutral clubs rather than the old spit and sawdust gyms” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15).

One issue identified from the data was that some CSPs (and some local council officers) would not offer support to clubs that had not achieved *Clubmark* accreditation (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15). Although the role of CSPs in *Clubmark* implementation was distinctly different between the sports of swimming and boxing, a number of swimming clubs also experienced similar circumstances with local authorities; all clubs had to hire

pool time and some local authorities refused to offer pool time to clubs that had not achieved *Clubmark* accreditation. This highlights the difficulty that clubs often faced: although the official message from SE, and respective NGBs, was that the accreditation is voluntary, some clubs found themselves in a difficult position where they felt forced to work towards the accreditation.

6.6 Development of EB's *Clubmark* knowledge

Over time EB officials developed their knowledge of *Clubmark* in relation to the diverse nature of the affiliated clubs, and how this affected strategies for the implementation of *Clubmark*. “The CSOs respond to what is in front of them as every club is different. There will be a degree of capacity building around some of the clubs where they won't have the necessary infrastructure to deliver a certain part [of *Clubmark*]” (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14).

6.6.1 Diverse nature of club contexts

The substantial diversity of clubs in terms of geographical location, membership composition and committee configuration make a uniform approach to implementation as one EB official explained:

We have around 900 clubs in the country. I've visited quite a few of them. I've never been to two clubs that look anything like the same. I've been to clubs in pubs, church halls, fantastic new buildings, and under railway arches. What we are trying to do is ensure all of the different clubs are administered in their own right, correctly and the best way they can be. Rather than say you must achieve *Clubmark*. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

This outlook is clearly different from the target-driven approach (WSP targets) the NGB assumed when implementation of *Clubmark* was first attempted. EB have clearly developed their knowledge to understand that a one-size-fits-all implementation approach does not work. Instead, rather than being prescriptive EB adopted a flexible approach whereby officers hold discussion with every club (predominantly via CSOs) in an attempt to ensure each club has a sustainable set-up:

If you put *Clubmark* to one side there's a certain administrative framework you want a club to have. We are trying to make sure every club, regardless of whether they are working towards *Clubmark* or not, has a certain administrative structure around it. Such as, appropriate committees, leadership, accounts, safeguarding, a well-qualified workforce, and a good quality building to do it all in. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

This move from the target-driven approach demonstrates a flexible top-down implementation strategy adopted by EB and that the NGB understood the important role of street-level policy actors (especially club members) in the process. Furthermore, this corresponds with Matland's (1995) *experimental* implementation category, where he suggested that contextual conditions dominate the process. Matland noted that “outcomes depend heavily on the resources and actors present in the microimplementing environment. These are likely to vary strongly from site to site, therefore broad variations in outcomes will occur.” (p. 166)

There is a number of small boxing VSCs in England where just one individual administers the club, which could prove detrimental if anything happened to that person. EB were attempting to deter clubs from this set-up. In fact, the recommendation of assigning tasks to a number of people was the first stage of the *Clubmark* step-by-step guide (Figure 6.3). This issue was something an EB official recognised, “One drawback is that if there’s one individual at a club who knows all about *Clubmark* (and the various policies) and if they leave, and then it all breaks down at the club.” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

6.6.2 Club’s interest in *Clubmark*

Despite limited staff numbers, EB recognised that without being proactive, and visiting clubs to guide them through the *Clubmark* accreditation process, there would likely be many cases of nonimplementation. Therefore, it was the responsibility of CSOs to make contact, provide guidance and visit every affiliated club within their region.

Although there were no formalised approaches for the NGB to communicate with its members it appeared that officials attempted to provide the members with as much information as possible through, as highlighted earlier, as many channels as possible. The reason was as a result of the lack of clubs being proactive (similar to clubs not enquiring about *Clubmark*) with their *Clubmark* template usage, as one EB official explained:

I’ve never had one club [in the region] download the *Clubmark* templates from the website without me telling them what to do. It’s always NGB led. It’s me telling them “you need this because...” or, “the benefit of this would be...” In my two years I’ve never had a club say to me “we want to do this....” They don’t understand the value. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15).

To cope with the lack of EB capacity, CSOs adopted various techniques, reported by interviewee EBA:

I tried the group approach [for providing *Clubmark* support] but boxing clubs are a funny breed. They are not overly keen on working together. There's quite a lot of rivalry in boxing. Some clubs are really good friends and I've been able to organise *Clubmark* workshops but it's rare that clubs will work together. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

This is an example of EB's implementation strategy sitting in Matland's *political* implementation quadrant (Matland, 1995). Although there is low policy ambiguity (clubs clearly understood EB's objectives), in some cases there were instances of high political conflict where clubs would not work together. For instance, BTC had chosen not to work with other local clubs:

We don't network with other clubs. There's a bit of local rivalry and needle. I don't like the way some clubs are run. (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

Although there were often rivalries between clubs, a consequence of this was that EB did not have to use coercive mechanisms to engage clubs in certain areas, "In one area there's quite a lot of rivalry. So, if one club gets it [*Clubmark*], then the others will work towards getting it. And that makes our job easier!" (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

When questioning an EB official about clubs' attitudes towards *Clubmark*, the response was as follows:

From my experience you get one or the other. You get one club that will do the absolute minimum and it looks like the information has been hashed together quite poorly. These types of club only see *Clubmark* as a means to an end to access funding, rather than striving for a quality mark. Even if they don't focus on the documentation, it is actually a step up [in governance], as most clubs don't have any policies or procedures. However, some clubs are really proud of what they've achieved, taken the process seriously and put a lot of effort in. Some clubs just want to be outstanding clubs. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

STBC members saw themselves in the latter category as the coach commented, "I was the first club in the county to be *Clubmarked* and within the top 10 of the whole of the region. So, do I think I'm better than most clubs? Yeah, damn right!" (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15). In fact, evidence suggested that STBC were a proactive club, which is unlike the majority of the clubs in England. Here, the coach described part of the *Clubmark* process:

We did have to update one or two things, like our constitution 'coz it had been there for four years sort of thing. Now we have a policy that we sit down and look at our policies every two years (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

Examining club policies is not an EB requirement; this is an example of the club going beyond the minimal standard. BTC were also proud and pleased that they had achieved *Clubmark* status, as this member described:

I believe it's a very good thing because it covers compliance, professionalism and the club's had to create a constitution. And it will help us reach our end goal, which is to secure our facility here and we're all glad we've done it. It only took about three months (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15)

However, the comment highlights a concern a senior EB official raised in relation to the reasons why clubs embarked on the *Clubmark* accreditation route, "I feel that the majority do it to access other forms of funding rather than use it for a quality assurance tool" (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14). These concerns were justified, as this STBC member explained his perception of *Clubmark*:

Clubmark hasn't changed the club in any way. Apart from we feel more confident. And it has helped with grants....The benefits, as far as I understand, are if two clubs go to the council for a grant, us and a club without *Clubmark*, we've got a better chance than them. (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

England Boxing did not directly offer financial incentives for achieving *Clubmark*. This is a different approach to swimming's NGB (see chapter 7) where a cash bonus and course discounts were offered once accreditation has been achieved. In boxing achieving *Clubmark* enabled clubs to produce more effective applications to other sources of funding. In fact, the mruk report (Cope et al., 2014) suggested that the benefits of achieving *Clubmark* were not sold or delivered well enough by NGBs; *Clubmark* needed to demonstrate that being accredited will set clubs apart in terms of their appeal to both funding bodies and the public. On account of the following comment, from a member of STBC, EB had certainly noted the recommendation, "EB are selling *Clubmark* well – access to funding. They know how to dangle the carrot!" (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15). However, some clubs did not require coercion; some had no alternative, "A club that does not have access to council funding really has no choice but to work towards *Clubmark* – so they can access other sources of funding." (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

Another issue CSOs experienced was that a number of clubs continued to not fully understand the requirements of *Clubmark*. One EB official provided an effective example to highlight the concern, "Some clubs, I've worked through *Clubmark* with them and produce a constitution, for example, then three months later they'll ring me up saying "we

need a constitution for something” and not even know they’ve already got one!” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

It is with this type of club where CSOs have to work hard to develop the club members’ understanding of the potential benefits associated with *Clubmark*. For example, some “clubs that are struggling to pay their rent, or get enough money together to take their kids to a show aren’t bothered about, as they see it, ticking a box” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). Other clubs have no interest in working towards *Clubmark* and have attempted to exploit the support offered by EB:

Some clubs will ring me asking about *Clubmark* and I’ll tell them where the information is on the website but I’ll know full well they’ll not look at it. Then, I’ll get a call asking if I could visit them and go over it with them. I then have to make a call to decide if they are taking the mick, expecting me to do it for them. Or, they actually need the help. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

With instances such as this it is important that EB have the time to develop a relationship with the clubs to enable them to make an informed decision about the actual level of implementation support required by a club. The EB officials were all in agreement of the importance that clubs embrace the process, which would benefit the club in the long run, rather than appointing someone external to the club to complete the paperwork. A CSO talked through an example of when I club attempted to appoint a friend:

The club member said to me, “Oh I know a businessman who could do this for us.” “Do this?!” So, I’ve had pages of documents back before, but it’s too well written and I know they don’t understand it and won’t implement the policies. It’s at that point we, the CSO and NBG, find ourselves in a sticky situation because we don’t want to come across unsupportive. They see it as an admin function, rather than a change of behaviour or governance for the club. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

The CSO was questioned further about how they dealt with the ‘sticky situations’? The response was:

I tell them now! I’ve been in the post long enough to tell them, “this isn’t what this is for! I’m not going to give you a certificate when you haven’t written this yourself and you won’t implement it.” Usually, I can talk them round and explain the value. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

Such a response from the CSO dictating what the clubs have to do (the agenda) to be awarded *Clubmark* corresponds with Lukes’ (1974) first and second faces of power.

Furthermore, these examples accord with Matland's (1995) description of *political* implementation; everyone is aware of the goals but there is conflict from the club members and compliance is not automatically forthcoming. Successful implementation is dependent on having sufficient power to ensure cooperation, which the CSO appeared to have. The CSO also recognised that the NGB did not want to appear unsupportive, so took the time to guide them over a series of meetings. This approach satisfies a number of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) concerns that implementation often fails if too much is expected too soon and changes in practices are often met with resistance.

Another technique a CSO developed in an effort to stop non-club members writing *Clubmark* policies on their behalf was to suggest that clubs acknowledge *Clubmark* on AGM minutes. This way there would be evidence that a committee has been involved in discussions, not just one person completing it all. The minutes can also indicate, "what the club are doing, why they are doing it and who is going to lead on what and how are they going to implement it when ready. This helps show that they aren't just getting a businessman to write it for them." (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

6.6.3 Gauging the appropriateness of *Clubmark*

The *Clubmark* process raised a series of issues, as this senior EB official explained:

There's a danger of being stereotypical here, but it's a good starting point as it can tease out some interesting themes. With the socio-demographic that tends to use boxing clubs, *Clubmark* is potentially meaningless. A club that is in a difficult estate, putting a *Clubmark* certificate on the wall does not necessarily mean more young lads will come into the club. So, the quality mark tends to have greater meaning to a higher socio-demographic audience. If you put it on a swimming club wall, most of the parents would probably say, "oh look, this club has *Clubmark*". Very stereotypical. But no one in urban boxing clubs knows what *Clubmark* is. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

Since 2013, EB/CSOs have learned to use *Clubmark* as a development tool with clubs that are in an appropriate position. That is, club members who want to embrace the process, or where the CSO can see a certain benefit for that club, they will then be recommended to engage in the *Clubmark* process. On the other hand, there have been clubs not in appropriate positions, which a senior EB official explained, "I've seen it where clubs have been advised that *Clubmark* is currently not appropriate. What's more appropriate is a programme around capacity building or administration. Our approach is: let's not do *Clubmark* for *Clubmark's* sake" (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14). Another EB official agreed

with this opinion, “we now only use *Clubmark* as and where we see fit.”(Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

Even if a club failed to successfully implement *Clubmark*, EB officials were not particularly worried about that as there was recognition of the benefits that working through the process itself brought to a club, as one EB official clarified, “*Clubmark* improves a club administratively, undoubtedly because they have to go through the processes to achieve *Clubmark*” (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14). While another EB official commented that, “some clubs have started the process but never achieved *Clubmark* but going through the process has made the clubs more fit for purpose.” The official continued by saying:

A poor club becomes a reasonable club and an average club becomes a very good club. This is why going through the *Clubmark* process is very worthwhile. (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

One of the biggest implementation barriers is the *Clubmark* requirement for a club to stage a boxing show. The issue with staging a show is two-fold; some clubs are small (see the following section as an example) and do not have aspirations or capacity to stage a show, the other reason is cost. A CSO explained the issues:

One of the biggest pitfalls, in boxing, is that to get *Clubmark* you have to have a show, which is where your boxers compete and there’s a rule where you can’t have more than half the number of boxers that aren’t from your club. So, if a club only has six carded boxers, then they’re not going to put a show on for them, which means they will never be able to get *Clubmark*. The other problem is cost – it costs about £1300 to put a show on. You have to hire a doctor, pay your officials, book a venue, hire a ring, provide food etc. So, is *Clubmark* actually valuable to a club to the tune of £1300? (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

The EB officials explained that with clubs in the situation of never being able to put on a show, and, as a consequence, not be able to achieve *Clubmark* they do work through elements of the *Clubmark* criteria in an effort to improve the administration of the club.

6.6.4 Club knowledge and administrative skill level

Over time EB developed a greater understanding of the varying levels of administrative skillset that the clubs’ committee members possessed across the 904 affiliated clubs in England. Yet, it was not only EB officials who developed knowledge to improve the chances of successfully implementing *Clubmark*, the coach of BTC used his initiative, as this committee member described, “the coach asked a few of the regular Boxercise

attendees if they wanted to become involved in the committee” (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15). The coach explained his thought process:

There were two girls who’d been coming to the fitness classes for a few years and I could tell they were kinda brainy so I asked if they’d like to join the committee. They know what they’re doing. They are good. They know how to write a letter. Now they are on the committee, instead of me doing everything when putting on a boxing show, they can help. (Interviewee BBA, 23.04.15)

This particular coach had no interest in any of the administrative side of running a boxing club; so, it was an astute move to involve others with greater clerical skills than he possessed. The following passage is a representative example of the nature of the implementation difficulties that EB faced when introducing *Clubmark* to traditionalist boxing coaches:

AT: Was working towards Clubmark your idea?

BTC Coach: Oh god, no! I think it was the committees’ idea. We have a new committee and they’re great. I don’t wanna sit in a committee meeting! I’d rather be in the gym with the lads and coaching them. (Interviewee BBA, 23.04.15)

This type of attitude and lack of administrative skills and knowledge was a national problem that EB had to continually deal with. Two further examples illustrate the dearth of administrative capacity amongst numerous clubs. The first was in relation to a club constitution, as one EB official explained:

There was actually a situation where I asked a club to go away and produce a constitution for the club. When I next met up with them the coach gave me the constitution but they’d written it in red crayon! I had to explain that it wasn’t acceptable so they went away and re-did it on a computer (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15).

A senior EB official described the second example:

There was a really good coach, fantastic club but communicating with him was difficult. It often took weeks for a response to an email and I had to chase on the phone no end of times and when I did get a response it was from his wife’s email address. Eventually, it transpired he couldn’t read, so had to get his wife to respond each time. So, we have to be mindful of the training level of our members (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

These examples were not isolated; similar circumstances encountered by EB officials across the country were commonplace. The lack of administrative ability of some club members also had an impact on EB officials:

I'd say half the clubs I've visited I've turned up at the wrong club because they've moved and haven't updated the club information, or I turn up at the coach's house! Often the club doesn't have a mailbox so the coach puts down their address instead of the club (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

Clearly, for an already-stretched NGB, wasting precious time reduces the number of clubs EB could support. Over time, EB recognised the difficulties that club members' face, which affected implementation of policy. Therefore, EB were in the process of initiating an effective workforce development strategy, as a senior EB official explained:

So, what we are trying to do is up-skill the volunteers to be able to deliver appropriate training to appropriate volunteers. If I asked every club "did they have an assigned welfare officer?" And we audited that information, the answer would probably be 'yes'. But if we checked to see if they have the appropriate skills, training, knowledge, and the support to do their job effectively, the answer is probably 'no'. So, there's a training gap. That's what our strategy is trying to address. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

The strategy to increase management capacity was initiated due to the experiences EB officials encountered while attempting to implement *Clubmark*. During this period the *Clubmark* framework was located somewhere between Matland's (1995) *experimental* and *symbolic* implementation types. With experimental implementation outcomes are greatly dependent on the resources and actors present at the local level. Matland suggested results would likely vary greatly from site to site; therefore, broad variations in outcomes will occur. With *symbolic* implementation the local level coalition strength determines the outcomes and the inherent ambiguity of the policy requirements leads to an increase in the range of interpretations. Matland noted that 'professions are likely to play an especially important role for symbolic policies. Professional training provides a strong set of norms to legitimate activities and effective problem-solving actions' (p. 169), which basically suggests that individuals with professional training are likely to be able to quickly offer proposals grounded in their professions. Therefore, this strategic action of up-skilling volunteers has the potential to satisfy some of the characteristics and move *Clubmark* towards the administrative implementation type. Furthermore, clubs (such as BTC) attempting to match professions with committee positions greatly increased the chance of successful implementation.

6.7 Safeguarding

It is important to note that safeguarding is primarily considered in relation to extrinsic issues such as bullying and sexual abuse but there are other intrinsic dimensions, which complicate the issue of safeguarding (the nature of the sport of boxing itself: competitors punching each other to win the contest). There have been significant debates, mainly in the medical community, about the safety of boxing with particular issues raised the use of headguards in amateur boxing (Dickinson & Rempel, 2016) and injury risk in professional boxing (Bledsoe, Li, & Levy, 2005; B. D. Jordan, 2000). In fact, since 1982 the British Medical Association have campaigned to ban boxing and in 2007 published a report that called for a complete ban on amateur and professional boxing (as well as mixed martial arts) due to concerns of causing acute and chronic brain damage, in addition to eye, ear and nose injury⁶⁷. Although such intrinsic issues are acknowledged, the focus of this research remained in line with the criteria as set out in SE's generic *Clubmark* framework, which does not directly assess the risks that might be inherent in sports such as boxing. Each NGB that carries the licence to award *Clubmark* are only issued the licence subsequent to relevant checks and satisfying specified SE conditions. While the broader aspects of safeguarding are acknowledged, this research was carried out with a focus on the definition of safeguarding adopted by SE.

EB, as other NGBs, developed policies that ensured all children receive the best possible experience in an environment safe from the possibility of mistreatment. The EB website provided a very clear safeguarding message:

All children and young people who participate in our organisation deserve and must expect a safe and positive experience throughout our nationwide network of clubs and events.

England Boxing's Child Protection Policy ensures that our children and young people are able to develop personally, socially, emotionally and physically within a culture that is committed to safeguarding them from harm⁶⁸.

In the 'Introduction and overriding principles' section of the January 2010 *Amateur Boxing Association of England Limited Child Protection Policy and Procedures* document (ABAE, 2010b) it stated:

Adherence to this Policy & its Procedures applies to all and is mandatory for all staff, members, athletes, coaches, officials, club officers and volunteers within the ABAE.

⁶⁷ <http://web.bma.org.uk/pressrel.nsf/wlu/SGOY-76QEY8?OpenDocument> (Accessed 17.06.17)

⁶⁸ <http://www.abae.co.uk/aba/index.cfm/about-us/child-protection-and-safeguarding/> (Accessed 19.05.15)

This was another strong, concise top-down message from the NGB. The document (on page 3) also specified that, 'This policy document will be subject to major review at least every three years'. The document was reviewed and a new policy document titled *England Boxing Child Protection Policy & Procedures* (England Boxing, 2014) was published in September 2014. The documentation, and the frequent reviews, demonstrates the importance EB places on safeguarding its members. Furthermore, EB introduced a new welfare role as part of the strategy to improve safeguarding in the sport:

We now have a National Compliance Manager who oversees welfare, safeguarding, anti-doping, and discipline...[A]s part of our emerging club-based process our Compliance Manager will be rolling out a more structured welfare officer training programme. We have gone through the process of training Regional welfare officers to give them the skills to be able to train and up-skill club Welfare Officers. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

Following the review there was recognition that the welfare officer training was not at an appropriate level, "we have divisional and regional welfare officers. Until recently our training has been fairly patchy. We now have a colleague who has a full time job to professionalise that" (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14). The senior EB official continued to explain the issue of how some individuals were allocated committee responsibilities:

There are a lot of jobs that people end up with in clubs. It's the classic AGM scenario where you go into the toilet and come out as a committee member! We want to ensure our welfare officers are appropriately trained (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

The introduction of the Compliance Manager (see Figure 6.6) was another clear indication of how important EB perceived safeguarding to be and that clubs should follow suggested best practice guidelines. The quote also extends from section 6.7.7 where there was recognition by EB that many of its members required knowledge development.

Furthermore, the example of a lack in basic equity knowledge demonstrated by some club members highlighted one of the implementation difficulties EB officials faced. The ABA (Ethics Commission) produced a five-page *Equity Policy* (ABAE, 2006) in November 2006, so club members should have possessed a basic awareness by the time the CSO role was introduced in 2013. If a club wished to achieve *Clubmark* at least one coach was required to attend the 'Equity in Your Coaching' course (in addition to the 'safeguarding & Protecting Children' course) as indicated in Step 3 of the EB *Clubmark* Step-by-Step Guide (England Boxing, 2013) to satisfy criteria: 1.2, 3.2, 3.3. Of interest, for implementation, is that Step 3 stated 'Contact your County Sports Partnership to book places on courses.' This

is another example of the problem of keeping dependency relationships to a minimum (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).

The way in which the EB welfare system was organised meant that individuals represented their club, their county, their division or their region as a welfare officer. A CSO thought that this set up was 'a mistake':

Obviously, they are all volunteers so the likelihood is that they are an ex-boxer, a coach, a treasurer or a manager so they have a certain affinity with their club or region and, as you'll be well aware, some welfare cases can be quite damaging. Or, there's a negative motivation in wanting to get involved with investigating something because it's in your own patch. (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

Another related situation occurred where an individual was a welfare officer and referee yet ended up refereeing at a competition where the club that they had been investigating was competing. In a strategy to address these issue EB were in the process of providing a core of individuals, spread across the country, who are appointed by EB in a voluntary capacity, familiar with welfare strategies, and can be contacted to investigate incidents in a professional manner (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14). This strategy was designed to remove any potential conflict of interest when investigating sensitive and difficult cases.

In addition there were other sensitive situations that EB recognised. For example, 'one-man-band' clubs pose particular problems as this senior EB official explained:

With many boxing clubs the coach is often a former boxer who becomes involved because their son or daughter now boxes and his beloved wife becomes the front of house administrator for the club. With that two-man-band set up the wife might become the welfare officer, while the husband is the coach. We are desperately trying to move away from that because if there's a criticism about the coach's behaviour you can't really have their partner investigating!" (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14)

In fact, EB make the recommendation that the welfare officer is not the coach or the coach's wife. However, this "causes no end of issues because so many clubs are one man and his wife!" (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). The CSO explained that when some club members were told of this they often flippantly responded, "Oh we'll stick so and so on the course, he or she can be the welfare officer" ...Well, that defeats the purpose - if they aren't involved in the club and they are just a name on a piece of paper it's pointless." (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15).

In an EB strategy update the welfare officer recommendation will change from a suggestion to a rule during 2016. However, a CSO did mention that the new rule will cause an issue with one club in their region, “ the wife is a social worker. There probably isn’t anyone better placed for that role so I will discuss this with the national compliance manager who we turn to for advice and clarification.” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). Both coaches of BTC and STBC were club welfare officers although each club also had more than one welfare officer, so may be unaffected by the change. This planned amendment corresponds with Lukes’ (1974) first face of power due to the NGB dictating the situation.

As part of the EB restructure the coaching systems were amended with one change being that for part of the Level 1 coaching qualification a coach will be required to attend a three-hour safeguarding workshop. Therefore, each club would have at least one welfare officer and any coach training through the EB system would receive welfare training. This is further recognition of the importance EB place of effective safeguarding within its clubs. Club members from BTC had attended training, “me and [another committee member] have been on a safeguarding course. We’ve got the certificates on the wall (Interviewee BBA, 23.04.15), as had a number of the members from STBC:

The safeguarding is a three-hour course. We use the local county sports partnership who deliver it. We have three welfare officers on the books, two men (including me) and a female welfare officer (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

Both clubs in this case study treated safeguarding with a great deal of importance and adopt their own additional elements to safeguarding policies. For example, the coach of BTC only allows coaches to be involved if they have the correct documentation:

I wouldn’t let anyone in this place if they’re not CRB’d [DBS check]. We’ve got two new coaches who are getting CRB’d. I’d let them in, they’re decent people but can’t risk it so I won’t let ‘em in ‘till they’ve got their CRB⁶⁹ (Interviewee BBA, 23.04.15)

STBC adopted a similar approach:

Our policy is that before any new coach is trained up we DBS check them. We’ve gone a bit further than the England Boxing rules; we have all coaches as safeguarding officers, so they’ve been on the course...We also have oxygen at the gym and also are having a defibrillator fitted. It’s more that England Boxing standards but it’s for our peace of mind. (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

These examples reveal how street-level policy actors (Lipsky, 1980) can affect implementation by developing policy appropriate to their local context. In these cases the

⁶⁹ Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, which has subsequently been replaced with DBS.

interpretations were not to the detriment of the policy, likely due to the importance placed on safeguarding driven by the historical cases of abuse in sport.

In fact, the coach and welfare officer of STBC also acted as the local DBS checker for clubs in his area. He explained how there was zero flexibility in the process:

DBS send the [completed] forms back if there is the slightest bit wrong, and they do send them back. People use all different colour pens so they won't be accepted. As a checker I have a special code and I believe this is because, in the past, people have just signed them off! (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

This is a national policy, which must be strictly adhered to. The only safeguarding compliance checking EB conduct in clubs is when a licensed official checks the documentation of a *Clubmark* submission. There were no other checks, "it's more of a voluntary code" (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15), as one BTC member suggested. Although there were no formalised compliance checks outside of this evidence suggested that clubs in general (nationally) did not require any coercion to conform; and the clubs in this study each went beyond the minimum requirements.

However, not all clubs in England have not been as enthusiastically compliant as the two in this case study and many attempt to get away with completing minimal paperwork as this CSO described, "some clubs just download the draft safeguarding document, add their logo and think that they now have a safeguarding policy. They don't add the local information relevant to their club." (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15). Where this is the case CSOs (or CSP officers) have spent time with the club to ensure understanding of the policy within the club is increased.

With the rapid growth of female boxing elements of the NGB's safeguarding strategy was also found to be located in Matland's (1995) experimental implementation quadrant, as this quote from a senior EB official demonstrates:

Historically, boxing clubs have been a male dominated environment so with the introduction of females into that environment it creates a whole lot of welfare issues, educational issues, facility issues, coaching issues that we are trying to respond to ensure we keep up with them as it's happening quite quickly. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

Matland suggested that the central principle driving this type of implementation is that contextual conditions dominate the process. The experimental iterations of these policies are perceived as important where evaluation and feedback are 'vital components of

effective learning' (p. 167). The sport of boxing was found to be the sport (from the three case studies) where safeguarding policy implementation was most significantly affected by the environment. Safeguarding was often a challenge for EB, as this senior EB official explained:

I wouldn't say it's operational risk but most boxing clubs are within urban settings where there's likely to be lots of recreational drugs around, potentially social issues sitting around the environment of the young club members. There's often quite a lot of violence, gangs, recreational or potential performance enhancing drugs within the environment. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

Therefore, EB must ensure that officials have an understanding of each club's local context and environment to secure successful implementation of safeguarding policies. Due to the limited EB resources (particularly funding and capacity) the NGB utilised additional support from CSP and LA officials, who possessed expert local knowledge, to assist with implementation. Following this approach corresponds with Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) recommendation that policies must be based upon an adequate understanding of the problem (in the context) to be solved otherwise implementation can fail.

Another strategic amendment identified, which would affect implementation, was in relation to the safeguarding courses. EB were using the generic NSPCC safeguarding courses (and *Time To Listen* for coaches) delivered through Sports Coach UK but the boxing officials stated that they were currently in the process of educating volunteers to become safeguarding instructors that would enable them to run their own boxing-specific courses. The NGB's plan is to make their own courses mandatory, phasing out the NSPCC child protection and *Time To Listen* courses. One senior EB official explained, "we are internalising it [safeguarding courses] and I think this will be great for our sport, they'll be able to bring anecdotes to life within the boxing context"(Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14). Once again, there was recognition by EB officials about the importance of the language used to communicate with the club members; clear communication, understanding and agreement on objectives are imperative for successful implementation (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).

Not only were EB seen to make various strategic safeguarding policy amendments but NGB officials also demonstrated a flexibility with the implementation of certain aspects of safeguarding. For example, relating to EB officials' relationships with club members:

Clubs where we are aware of safeguarding issues – that are not serious enough to warrant action but are a concern – then we can go in and suggest they get safeguarding policies and

procedures in place. It's a nicer angle for us to go at them rather than the wagging finger approach. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

This flexibility reveals that the EB official had developed an understanding of the club environment. Then, by adopting this approach any potential defensive resistance would be minimised and compliance is more likely to be achieved.

6.8 Increasing membership and/or participation

EB Statistics indicated that approximately 80,000 participated in boxing once a week yet only circa 15,000 would ever enter the ring to fight.⁷⁰ EB have a four-year 2013-2017 WSP target for increasing participation. As can be seen in Table 5.2 (chapter 5) the APS 2013-2017 fourth year target for EB was still to be confirmed. What was agreed between SE and EB was a participation growth strategy as part of the WSP funding. Figures were being measured against growth numbers across certain age groups and demographics such as, 14-24, 25+, male and female, for example (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14) The final targets are measured by Sport England's APS. The participation figures for boxing can be seen in Table 6.1.

Since data was first captured in APS1 boxing participation has seen a fluctuation in participation figures but overall there has been a steady upward trend. The disparity between the latest EB figures and figures in Table 6.1 was explained by a senior EB official, "some of the respondents to the APS might be professional boxers, which is outside our remit and a lot of people use boxing for fitness purposes." (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14). Another senior EB official spoke of an additional issue they identified with the survey, "Sport England's funding was 16+, it's not 14+. If you visited a boxing club, most of the kids you'll see in there are young. Say, 10 to 16. So, the majority of our member population are young boxers, which are not necessarily captured in Active People" (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15).

⁷⁰ <http://www.slideshare.net/Sportandrec/sport-minds-england-boxing-keynote> (19.10.15)

Table 6.1 Once a week boxing participation (1x30 minutes) aged 16+

APS publication	Number of boxing participants
APS1 (Oct 2005-Oct 2006)	115,500
APS2 (Oct 2007-Oct 2008)	106,800
APS3 (Oct 2008-Oct 2009)	121,400
APS4 (Oct 2009-Oct 2010)	117,200
APS5 (Oct 2010 - Oct 2011)	149,700
APS6 (Oct 2011 - Oct 2012)	140,400
APS7 (Oct 2012 - Oct 2013)	154,800
APS8 (Oct 2013 - Oct 2014)	145,100
APS8 Q3 - APS9 Q2 (Apr 2014 - Mar 2015)	136,700
APS9 (Oct 2014 - Sep 2015)	166,400

Source: Adapted from information on the SE website⁷¹

EB's participation strategy was based around their affiliated clubs, which was part of the NGB's strategic move. With the introduction of CSOs, it was their role to help clubs become more sustainable. The important point was that, as a senior EB official suggested, the strategy was, "led by the clubs, and their capacity, rather than being policy led." (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14). Ensuring clubs have adequate resources is vital for implementation success (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984) and this approach reiterated the importance of the club members at the point of delivery (Lipsky, 1980), which EB appeared to recognise.

Understanding the composition and characteristics of an NGB's affiliated clubs is important for developing strategies (such as increasing membership and participation). However, EB admitted that, as a national governing body, the data capture was not particularly reliable, as this senior EB official explained:

We rely on the registrars to send through the information. Some of it is done very well; some of it is not done so well. Nationally we would like to know how many coaches we've got, when was the last time they received training, when was the last time they did any CPD or welfare training. I'd say compared to a lot of other governing bodies we are quite poor at that. We need this information to understand our participation.

⁷¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/research/who-plays-sport/by-sport/> (Accessed 14.06.16)

In an attempt to improve the NGB's data capture one of the roles of the CSO was to start documenting club data and EB were also in the process of developing a new data capture method, which would have the slogan 'Punch it in'. The plan was to use technology (probably an app) in every club to measure the participation where boxers could simply 'punch in' their registration details, then every time they attended swipe in, which would enable EB more confidently to report participation figures back to SE (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14). During interviews the NGB officials displayed careful consideration in developing an implementation strategy by demonstrating recognition that a change in policy was often met with suspicion by those affected by changes (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984), as this comment from a senior EB official indicated:

When we start going back to the constituent clubs asking them how many members they've got, they probably start thinking that we are wanting to start charging them more for membership. It's not about a charging policy, it's about capturing participation figures; how many boys, girls, what is the BME? It is about becoming a more intelligent organisation. We want to get that management information system in place so we know our client (our members) a lot better than we do now. We want to have a better central data capture, rather than being reliant on regional volunteers who are often pressed for time. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

EB adopted various other strategies in an attempt to increase participation. One method was through *satellite clubs*, an extension of a hub club that was usually in an education setting (a secondary school, for example). A CSO explained why these types of venues were selected:

A local school or college facility is a nice neutral venue to try the sport, rather than in a dingy, scary club setting. It is an extension of a club where a Level 2 coach goes in to deliver 'BoxFit' once a week sessions, which is a focus on keep fit and no contact. If the people enjoy it they can join the club. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

EB found this a successful way of increasing participation and targeted setting up an additional seven satellite clubs during 2016. However, it appeared that although using satellite clubs proved to be a successful approach for increasing participation, EB officials found it difficult to alter the culture of established coaches within certain clubs, as one CSO explained:

We are trying to get away from the pure competitive-focused coaches. We need to re-educate a lot of our coaches...We're trying to get clubs to be more business-like [promoting their club and shows] rather than the closed-door, run your own club mentality. They need to have a better grasp on marketing and shout more about what they do. This is what

Clubmark is good for – they get great publicity out of it, often a photo in the local paper of them being presented with it by the CEO. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15).

The sport of boxing has seen a change from a purely competitive sport to a sport with a recreational arm. Some coaches were interested in competitive and some in recreational boxing. The competitive coaches were often only interested in training the next amateur champion, with no interest in fitness classes and increasing participation initiatives. A CSO mentioned that when they mentioned *Clubmark* to these types of coach they could tell that, “they’d rather cut their own ear off...and can’t see the value to them as they’ve been coaching for 40 years.” (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15) and continued to explain:

Who are we to tell a coach who spends three nights a week working with seven lads who’ll never get in the ring and box to stay a couple of extra hours each night and maybe a few other nights a week because Sport England say so to increase participation figures while your wife and kids are at home who you’ve not seen all week. For those small clubs, who wouldn’t have the time, there’s no point banging your head against a brick wall to try and get them to achieve *Clubmark*. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

This further demonstrated how officials recognised the constraints of the local environment and the variation of available capacity within clubs. An implementation strategy adopted by one EB official in an attempt to engage certain coaches was by using appropriate language (as explained in section 6.7.4):

I explain to competitive-focused coaches that if they do both, say 10 recreational boxers at £3.50 a session is £35 per week, which could be a new pair of gloves for the club, or instead of £10 petrol money from their own wallet it can be taken from the club pot. Then, this would help our APS figures. (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15)

Talking to the coaches in this way helped highlight the possible tangible benefits for the club, which corresponds with Etzioni’s (1961) remunerative compliance mechanisms that Matland (1995) recommended were one method of gaining compliance from an individual involved in implementation. In this case study, the evidence indicated that the coach of STBC accepted the recreational boxing approach,

We are going to do some exhibition bouts in a local school at a sports day event we have arranged. We’ll take the ring along and try to talk to some of the children and encourage sport and boxing participation...and we find that if people come along to the fitness classes, then get involved that way (Interviewee BBB, 14.05.15).

On the other hand, it was established that the coach of BTC was not particularly interested in fitness classes. Nevertheless, it was through the boxing fitness classes held at the club where he identified the 'brainy' females who eventually became committee members. The coach was asked if he actively tried to increase club membership? His response was, "No. We've got enough" (Interviewee BBA, 23.04.15). However, one of the committee members of BTC explained that they had in fact engaged in increasing participation strategies:

We've been into four primary schools and done eight weeks in a senior school through *Sportivate*. We do local fetes and send leaflets out. Three or four hours outside Sainsbury's...but it's quite hard coz the coaches have to take time off work. (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

Not only did the club member recognise certain implementation barriers that they faced but also capacity issues of EB:

The CSO is on board helping out [with participation initiatives] but I think the CSO has over 100 clubs to deal with, it's a hell of a lot to deal with. And I'd say most are not well off clubs. So, how much time can the CSO actually spend to help them all? (Interviewee BAR, 23.04.15)

Although one CSO suggested that, "increasing participation is always in the back of our minds" (Interviewee EBA, 10.04.15) another senior EB official revealed that, "there's no evidence that *Clubmark* increases participation" (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14). Despite EB having no evidence that *Clubmark* increased participation the evidence indicated that the NGB was managing its relationship with SE by fulfilling the participation target obligations. Furthermore, this example highlighted the ever-increasing conditional funding approach SE proposed, "often, with Sport England funding there are strings attached around increasing participation" (Interviewee EBC, 29.09.14). Attaching conditions was a demonstration of power, dictating the situation, which fits with Lukes' (1974) first face of power. Consequently, the NGB perceived that there was an increased chance for boxing to grow through focusing on those who box for fitness [recreational boxers] rather than those who will end up in the ring. (Interviewee EBB, 14.08.14)

6.9 Managing implementation

Drawing on Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict model of policy implementation it is clear that, over time, the success of EB's *Clubmark* implementation has varied. The use of Matland's model throughout this chapter provides analysis of the national picture, not an extrapolation of the two club case studies. The two cases that are dealt with in more detail

were seen by EB officers as untypical given the fact both clubs were happy to participate in the *Clubmark* process.

Figure 6.7 depicts an overview from the point that *Clubmark* (including safeguarding and membership/participation) was first introduced by EB, in 2008, to the end of 2015. The three policy strands will now be discussed in greater detail.

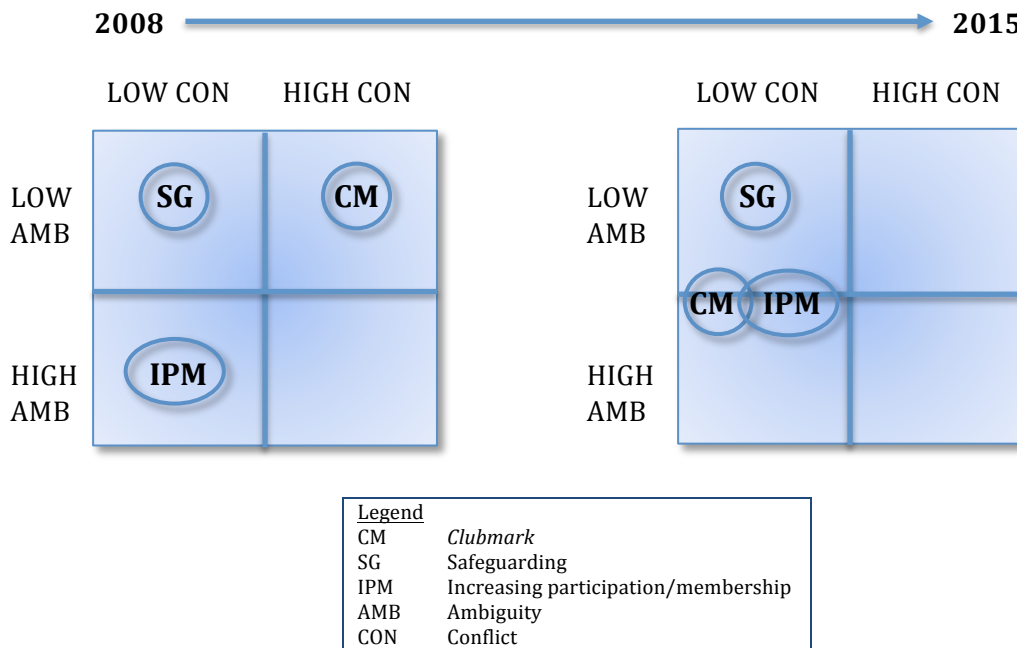


Figure 6.7 Implementation ambiguity and conflict levels over time for boxing

6.9.1 Safeguarding

Since 2008 implementation of this policy (the various safeguarding requirements) generally followed the top-down model, and continued to follow the ideal into 2015. Data suggested that the safeguarding policy (and the associated requirements) was initially located in the *Administrative implementation* quadrant, and, with the odd exception, has not moved from its position over time. Policies within this paradigm are inherently low in conflict and low in ambiguity.

In the case of safeguarding in boxing, with the policy located in the *Administrative implementation* quadrant, normative mechanisms have brought about compliance; (the majority of) boxing clubs and EB treated safeguarding compliance as a priority. This was primarily due to the knowledge of the historical sexual abuse cases that plagued sport

during the 1990s. EB, like all NGBs, wanted to ensure the club environment was safe and enjoyable for its members. The ramifications (which, would likely see a club fold) as a result of non-compliance were enough of an incentive to ensure clubs successfully implemented EB safeguarding policies and procedures.

However, EB officials did identify a few cases where local-level non-implementation had occurred. For example, some clubs had stated that they had safeguarding policies in place, yet when CSOs completed checks it turned out the clubs were only paying lip service to EB. Instances where clubs had stated that they had safeguarding/welfare policies in place, when in fact, did not often occurred due to a lack of interest to fill out the relevant paperwork, inadequacies of knowledge and a lack of capacity, rather than major disagreements with the policy goals. Therefore, at times (with some clubs), implementation of safeguarding policies moved towards *Political implementation*. Not that there was particularly high conflict; rather, compliance was not automatically forthcoming. Such instances became less frequent once the CSOs had visited all clubs within their region to explain *Clubmark* (and safeguarding) requirements in greater detail. The face-to-face meetings help to satisfy a number of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) conditions for successful implementation; the CSO can ensure goals are effectively communicated, clearly understood, and evaluate the resources available to each club.

Both STBC and BTC had no issue in following the *EB child protection policy and procedures* documentation guidance. Every individual who came into contact with children (or, even had the potential to do so) as a coach had to have a current DBS check certificate, and the role of the welfare officer was taken seriously in both clubs. Even though STBC was a smaller (rural) club they had eight committee members, which included two welfare officers: one male and one female to cover any potential situations that may arise. BTC also had more than one welfare officer.

6.9.2 Clubmark

When this policy (*Clubmark*) was first introduced in 2008 the framework was located in the *Political implementation* quadrant because compliance was not automatically forthcoming from many clubs. There were clearly defined goals set out by EB (low policy ambiguity) yet club members perceived *Clubmark* as additional bureaucratic paperwork from the NGB, failing to comprehend or be persuaded by the potential benefits it could bring to the clubs.

Implementation of *Clubmark* moved around Matland's (1995) implementation typology since the 2008 introduction. EB officials explained that initially many clubs across England were not interested in *Clubmark*. In fact, interview data revealed many clubs were unaware of the *Clubmark* framework. Club members' awareness of *Clubmark* saw a noticeable increase once the CSO role was introduced, which was primarily as a result of the face-to-face meetings CSOs held with clubs but also as a result of EB regularly updating their website with *Clubmark* information and guidance documentation.

Once club awareness of *Clubmark* increased (which was one of the recommendations from the mruk report) implementation moved towards Matland's (1995) *Experimental implementation* quadrant. Club members began to gain a greater understanding of the requirements for *Clubmark* and appreciated the potential benefits of achieving the accreditation standard. In efforts to gain the increased acceptance of *Clubmark* for clubs, and compliance for implementation, EB utilised remunerative-based mechanisms with suggestions that there would be improved success for grant and funding applications if the club had been awarded *Clubmark* status. Implementation depends heavily on the resources and the individuals within the club, particularly in the small 'one-man band' clubs.

Throughout the implementation process EB's strategy aligned with Matland's (1995) *Experimental implementation*, particularly following the introduction of the new CSOs role. For a few years subsequent to the introduction of the role in 2013 CSO officers took time to familiarise themselves with the clubs within their region. Therefore, the contextual conditions and the local club environments, which affect implementation, had to be understood for CSOs to provide the most appropriate implementation support for each club. EB officials appreciated that some clubs would never be in the position to achieve *Clubmark* so, in some cases, guided them through various elements of the *Clubmark* criteria in an attempt to improve the organisation and governance structures of such clubs. However, although EB wanted clubs to be self-sufficient it was revealed that, in some instances, EB officials offered substantial support to clubs, almost writing a constitution for them, for example. Having said that, EB officials did appear to have developed knowledge, through experience, as to which clubs genuinely required the extra support and which clubs attempted to take advantage of the available support.

As clubs across the country became more aware of *Clubmark*, implementation gravitated closer to Matland's (1995) *administrative* implementation quadrant. An increasing number of clubs were assured of a positive outcome (achieving *Clubmark*), providing the individual club had sufficient resources. Although implementation for most clubs became *administrative* implementation, there were still clubs across England where club members did not have the motivation to absorb the principles of the *Clubmark* accreditation (high ambiguity, high conflict resulting in *symbolic* implementation) and other clubs where members knew of the requirements but simply were not interested in the process (low ambiguity, high conflict resulting in *political* implementation). These scenarios demonstrate how important the street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980), the club members, are in the process of implementation; without acceptance effective implementation becomes difficult. For clubs located in these latter two implementation quadrants it was up to CSOs to make judgment calls, as explained in the previous paragraph. If a CSO felt a club would benefit from *Clubmark* they tended to seek compliance with a combination of coercive and remunerative mechanisms, which is consistent with Matland's (1995) model. CSOs attempted (and generally succeeded) to develop relationships with club members that enabled them to legitimise authority with power and explain why and how *Clubmark* would be beneficial.

6.9.3 Membership and participation

Increasing membership and participation were closely linked in boxing. EB introduced the CSO role to develop the support offered to clubs. The strategy to increase participation was focused around improved club support, which would hopefully enable clubs to grow their membership and, in turn, increase participation. Increasing membership and participation were located in the *Experimental implementation* quadrant as outcomes depended on the level of club volunteer involvement and the specific contextual conditions for the process. Some clubs wanted to expand their membership; others lacked the resources and capacity (volunteers) to do so. CSOs discussed the desire of each club and offered support accordingly. Both STBC and BTC were found to be happy with their respective membership bases but did engage in advertising their clubs at schools and outside supermarkets in an attempt to boost membership numbers.

6.10 Conclusion

The analysis has highlighted three distinct issues evident with the implementation of *Clubmark* and the associated policies. Boxing is a good example of negotiated implementation of policy. As explained in chapter 5, it was the desire of SE that *Clubmark* was adopted by recognised NGBs and implemented into their member clubs, which is very much a top-down approach. From the EB's point of view *Clubmark* was initially not as much of a priority. The NGB moved away from setting and attempting to meet *Clubmark* targets in the WSP, highlighting how EB subtly tried to find an approach that was more relevant and attractive to their clubs; rather than having clubs feeling obliged that it was a requirement to work towards *Clubmark* (having 'arms twisted' in some cases) while dealing with its obligation to deliver *Clubmark* for SE. Therefore, what was seen as a priority for SE was less so for EB, and even less of a priority for clubs. However, the mruc independent review (Cope et al., 2014) was evidence that *Clubmark* had been neglected by SE for a number of years.

This case study also highlighted how EB attempted to manage its relationship with SE and fulfil its WPS obligation while, at the same time, manage its relationship with clubs by building capacity and convincing club members that *Clubmark* was something positive for clubs rather than it being perceived as a bureaucratic obligation. The strategy became less coercive over time. Particularly, once WSP targets were removed and CSOs gained a greater understanding of each clubs' aspirations.

The lack of capacity and resource requirements for the implementation of *Clubmark* was a third key point identified. From the interviews EB clearly recognised their lack of capacity; EB sub-contracting *Clubmark* support through CSPs and LAs was additional evidence of a lack of EB capacity. The 2013 restructure was EB's attempt to improve regional support capacity. Furthermore, many clubs across England similarly suffered with capacity issues, which affected the ability to successfully implement *Clubmark* and associated policies. EB recognised this issue and were working hard to lighten the workload in such clubs. Moreover, EB identified a widespread deficiency of knowledge among its members, which was affecting the successful implementation of *Clubmark*. Consequently, EB were in the process of a national roll-out to up-skill members and volunteers.

The final point was in relation to the general success of the process of implementation. The process was negotiated through the top-down and bottom-up approaches,

acknowledging the variable capacity within clubs, providing support for the clubs, and gradually there was an increase in the number of clubs achieving *Clubmark* accreditation.

6.10.1 Clubmark

For the sport of boxing the *Clubmark* framework (policy) was of moderate to high importance to the NGB and fairly low for the majority of clubs. The NGB did not drastically modify the generic SE framework, primarily due to the NGB lacking the capacity and resource to spend a substantial period of time tailoring the criteria. Implementation of *Clubmark* was not imposed on clubs by the ABA/EB since the NGB were aware of the local constraints and capacity issues many clubs suffered.

6.10.2 Safeguarding

Safeguarding was a narrowly focused policy and seen to be very important to both of the boxing clubs and the ABA/EB. Although safeguarding was of great importance for clubs across England (and the NGB) there was still a need for flexibility in implementation due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of some club members. Rather than disciplining club members who had not quite satisfied safeguarding criteria the CSOs adopted sensitive top-down management approaches (providing the issues were not so serious that further action was necessary).

6.10.3 Membership and participation

Increasing membership and participation was narrowly focused but of low importance to (both case study) boxing clubs and of only moderate importance to the NGB. The clubs in this case study had membership bases that were manageable for the resources and capacity they possessed. The NGB recognised the lack of capacity in clubs across England so were “club led” rather than being “policy led” with their increasing participation strategies; the focus was on making clubs become more sustainable, which, long-term would improve the membership of clubs (and hence, participation figures).

6.10.4 Role of EB

Analysis demonstrated that EB drastically developed its implementation knowledge following the organisational restructure; it enabled CSOs to then visit clubs and gain greater understanding of the local complexities and constraints that clubs faced. Initially,

in the early-2000s, the ABA attempted to take a strong line on implementation of *Clubmark*. This was primarily due to the ABA including *Clubmark* targets in the previous WSP. Over time, the ABA/EB became more conscious of the need to adapt to differing club circumstances and removed *Clubmark* targets in the current WSP. EB also became aware that the level of knowledge across its membership needed to be improved to enable clubs to effectively implement *Clubmark* and safeguarding policies. Consequently, EB initiated a process of up-skilling certain club volunteers (such as safeguarding officers) to enable them to be (more) self-sustaining. The implementation strategy EB adopted was one of flexibility; only supporting clubs through the accreditation process they felt would either be able to cope with (and understand) the process, or benefit from the accreditation.

Chapter 7 Case Study Two: Swimming

7.1 Introduction

The chapter begins with an introduction to the ASA followed by an overview of the two community swimming clubs selected for the case study. The subsequent section provides an overview of the ASA's *Clubmark* framework, an introduction to the ASA Clubs Team and how development of NGB's knowledge affected implementation. Then, safeguarding and increasing membership and participation policies are introduced. Throughout this chapter the application of the policy implementation theoretical framework was utilised to facilitate a discussion of managing implementation prior to the discussion of findings.

7.2 Amateur Swimming Association

In 1869 the ASA was established as the world's first governing body of swimming and currently has responsibility for English swimming, diving, water polo, synchronised swimming and open water swimming. The ASA and two other Home Country NGBs (Scottish Swimming and Swim Wales) are members of British Swimming: the NGB for Great Britain. While British Swimming focuses on elite performance to develop medal success at major championships the ASA concentrates its efforts on supporting over 1,200 affiliated swimming clubs in England. The clubs span from grassroots through to elite level through a national, regional and sub-regional structure (see Figure 7.1) and comprise of over 180,000 members (ASA, 2013a). The ASA 'endeavours to ensure every athlete – whatever their age or level of experience – belongs to a club that provides the best possible support and environment through programmes such as *swim21*, the ASA's 'Quality Mark' for clubs'⁷². To provide support to ASA-affiliated swimming clubs, the ASA has specified six fundamental objectives for their '2013-2017 Strategy'. These are:

- To increase the number of schools providing quality swimming in line with ASA guidelines as part of a local learn to swim network.
- To maximise the effective use of available water space in England in order to attract, retain and increase the number of people taking part in regular aquatics activities.
- To build, develop and maintain a quality sustainable club infrastructure and network that meets the needs of the community it serves.
- To increase the size and success of the English talent pool.

⁷² <http://www.swimming.org/asa/about-us/the-asa/> (Accessed 11.02.14)

- To improve the skills and technical capabilities of the aquatics workforce and its ability to innovate.
- To enhance the ASA's leadership of the swimming industry.⁷³

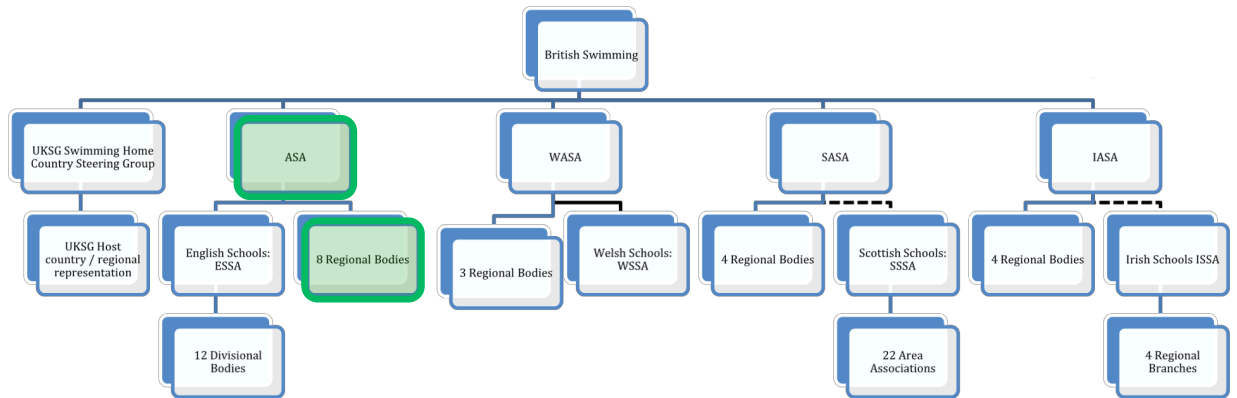


Figure 7.1 Organisational structure of swimming in Great Britain (Melville, 2012)

7.3 Community swimming clubs

Two community swimming clubs located in the East Midland region of England were selected for this swimming case study. Both clubs will now be introduced to provide some history and a context for each club.

7.3.1 Town Swimming Club

Town Swimming Club (TSC), formed in 1977, is located in an urban area with surrounding countryside at its western and northern boundaries. The population estimate from the 2008 census is 21,600. As of June 2015 the club had five separate squads: Mini (ASA National Plan Learn to Swim framework); pre-competition (swimmers continue with the ASA National Plan, working towards stages 8-10 and are introduced to racing techniques); junior (predominantly aged between nine and twelve who represent the club in competitions); senior (swimmers age 13 and over who train six times a week); and masters (swimmers over the age of 25). The main squad sessions take place at the Town Leisure Centre which is owned by the local authority, providing competitive swimming for children of all ages and also a Masters' section for the adults. TSC's *Learn To Swim*

⁷³ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/about-us/the-asa/> (Accessed 11.02.14)

programmes take place in two other nearby towns following the ASA's National Plan for swimming.

The club website stated that they pride themselves on being a family-oriented club encouraging parent participation to help out at galas and time trials with timekeeping, stewarding and officiating duties⁷⁴. TSC currently has a membership base of 194 swimmers, 260 members and a committee consisting of 12 individuals. TSC are fully accredited to the ASA's *Clubmark swim21* framework. TSC first achieved the accreditation in 2004 and have retained the status ever since.

7.3.2 Small Town Swimming Club

Small Town has an estimated population of 14,100 according to the local district council. Small Town Swimming Club (STSC) was formed in 1976. The first training session took place at Small Town Leisure Centre, the facility where the club continues to train. In the early 1980s the club continued to develop. There were only two other swimming clubs within a 15-mile radius and by this point there was a one-month waiting list to join the club. In the mid-1980s the club increased the training time from one hour on a Monday night to three sessions a week (Interviewee SBD, 16.01.11).

The first coach was a local woman and following her departure in the mid 1980s, the club has had a total of seven other coaches. Between 2000 and 2010 the club went through five different coaches and a number of changes on the committee. This turnover was due to a variety of reasons, such as: professional career development, family reasons and moving away from the area. One large committee turnover was a result of an escalation of personality clashes within the committee. A consequence of the rift saw a handful of members simultaneously resign. Throughout this decade additional committee roles and responsibilities were defined and this continued when the club commenced working towards *swim21* accreditation. STSC are fully accredited through the ASA's quality mark *Clubmark* framework. STSC first worked towards *swim21* in 2006, achieving the accreditation in 2008 and have been awarded continuous reaccreditation ever since.

In June 2015, the club had six separate squads: Squad 1 (District-level swimmers); Squad 2 (county-level swimmers); Squad 3 (junior masters' swimmers); Masters (swimmers over the age of 25); Junior Competitive (younger swimmers who represent the club in

⁷⁴ Website URL available at examiners' request

competitions); and Junior Development (Learn to Swim framework). Currently, the club has a membership base of circa 200 swimmers and the committee consists of nine individuals.

7.4 swim21: The ASA's Clubmark

The ASA applied to become a licensee of *Clubmark* because the organisation “felt it was really important that affiliated clubs are fit for purpose and can work towards a quality mark” (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14). In February 2002 the ASA introduced the quality assurance accreditation framework, designated *swim21*. It was named under the brand name of *swim21* to represent ‘swimming for the twenty-first century’. The ASA felt it was important to incorporate the term ‘swim’ or ‘swimming’ in the title rather than use Sport England’s generic designation of *Clubmark* in an attempt “to provide meaning to swimming clubs and other aquatic disciplines” (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14). This is the ASA’s quality assurance measure, which has the aim of “creating the best possible swimming experience for all and to raise the quality of swimming provision across all areas”⁷⁵.

A team within the ASA formulated the swimming-specific framework for ASA-affiliated swimming clubs. The framework was designed so that once a club satisfied the requirements of *swim21* then *Clubmark* status is automatically achieved. The primary reason for altering Sport England’s *Clubmark* framework was to ensure ASA-affiliated clubs were delivering in a quality environment to a level the ASA themselves deemed adequate. A senior ASA official responsible for managing *swim21* explained, “we took the basic *Clubmark* framework and adapted it as our own to make it a more robust process for our clubs, knowing that we had issues such as safeguarding that we needed to expand on as they are quite historical in swimming” (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13).

This action resonates with Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams policy analysis that draws on Cohen, March, and Olsen's (1972) ‘garbage can’ model, which suggested, in contrast to the rational model, that a combination of problems, (ready-made) solutions and choices are thrown into a garbage can whereby any of the three could be encountered. Kingdon suggests that the three separate streams must come together at the same time, during a window of opportunity, before a policy will change significantly. In this case, the ASA were presented with a policy stream (Sport England’s *Clubmark*) and were aware of the context

⁷⁵ www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/swim21-accreditation/ (Accessed 02.08.15)

of their problem stream (the historical safeguarding issues). The ASA considered this an opportunity to address the historical issues with a politics stream (i.e. positive political mood among clubs and the general public) by comprehensively modifying the *Clubmark* framework into a swimming-specific policy to ensure the problem would be effectively addressed.

The *swim21* framework was designed to act as a development tool, allowing swimmers, teachers, coaches and those responsible for developing programmes to continually improve and also provide a safe environment for club members. A senior official at the ASA explained why the organisation considers *swim21* to be so important to the ASA:

It's making sure you're demonstrating that everything's in place. *Clubmark* came about from a policy, meaning parents could go and say, "How do I distinguish this club from that club?" Or, "How do I know this coach has got the qualifications they say they've got?" "How do I know they've got safeguarding in practices? etc." (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13)

In essence a club with *swim21* has recognition that it has achieved minimum operating standards in safeguarding and protecting children, quality coaching, equal opportunities and good management, which should make a club more attractive to potential members.

It is not, and never was, a requirement that clubs worked towards *swim21*. Yet, during the early years of *swim21* there were accreditation targets for the number of clubs achieving the framework, set by the consultants Knight, Kavanagh and Page (KKP), who were the organisation that managed *Clubmark* on behalf of SE until replaced by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). More recently, targets are no longer dictated to the ASA by SE but are agreed through a process of negotiation, "because we [the ASA] didn't want it to be a numbers game" (Interviewee SC, 12.02.15). Interview data from senior ASA officials revealed that although SE do continue to monitor the number of clubs involved with *swim21* (as with all NGBs offering *Clubmark*), "key performance indicator (KPI) targets are agreed between SE and the ASA" (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14) and are not determined solely by SE. Another senior official added:

We have to report back to Sport England on a quarterly basis but...we select the targets. For each of our eight ASA regions we talk to officers, look at the number of clubs in the region and look at the ability for those clubs to become *swim21* accredited (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13).

The latest agreed targets are fluid targets, which were incorporated into the ASA's current WSP. "We currently have regional targets rather than one group [ASA] target"

(Interviewee SD, 14.04.15) with the overall target being 60 per cent pro rata of all ASA-affiliated clubs, in preference to working towards one specific static number. Another ASA official stated, "It's not a numbers game - we truly believe in *swim21*... it is about driving up standards and quality and clubs being fit for purpose. Hence we built it into our whole sport plan" (email correspondence, 31.07.15). The Clubs Team (see section 7.5) holds quarterly meetings and update PwC with the number of *swim21*-accredited clubs subsequent to each meeting. In April 2015 there were 496 clubs that had achieved *swim21 club Essential* status, which was an increase of 23 from the previous quarter (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15).

Although the ASA make it clear that achieving *swim21* accreditation is not a requirement, as previously discussed, the ASA do have *Clubmark* accreditation target KPIs as agreed with SE. Consequently, the ASA do actively encourage clubs to implement *swim21*. In fact, the closing message from a senior ASA official's interview was:

The most powerful part of *swim21* is 'the process itself'; it ensures a club is sustainable and operating within a safe effective environment. Even now, the impression the ASA get up and down the country is that clubs still probably implement *swim21* because of the tangible benefits, such as one region pays £500⁷⁶ directly to an accredited club. (Interviewee SC, 12.02.15)

The first sentence of the quote highlights the importance of the *swim21* accreditation to the ASA. The second sentence is evidence of the scale of challenges the ASA continue to face; not all clubs share the same philosophy as the ASA and only work towards accreditation achievement for monetary rewards. Evidence has shown that the ASA widely promote the benefits of implementing the *swim21* framework in an attempt to increase the number of clubs involved. The vast majority of the ASA's *swim21* literature⁷⁷ examined clearly promoted these perceived benefits, such as: enhancing club management; strengthening the structures; uniting the club with a philosophy; ensuring sustainability; and guaranteeing the best environment is available for swimmers. Relating to the promotion of *swim21*, one ASA official said:

As a governing body we try and encourage all clubs to work towards our accreditation. From a parent's point of view, a *swim21* accredited club would indicate that the club takes safeguarding seriously and workforce are appropriately qualified, for example. We produce *swim21* case studies of best practice clubs to market and circulate to offer

⁷⁶ This figure varies between the eight regions due to the semi-autonomous organisational structure of the ASA that means each region determines its own budget.

⁷⁷ Sources included documentation on the ASA website (guidance, templates), the ASA 2013-2017 Strategy Report, the ASA Club Conferences 2014 material and user guides and templates located on the online portal.

guidance. We have published examples in *Swimming Times* [UK's most popular swimming magazine] (Interviewee SD, 14.04.14)

This promotion and marketing by the ASA of *swim21* are positive steps and fits with the findings of the mruk *Clubmark* report (Cope et al., 2014) conducted on behalf on SE. One of the key findings was that many of the target audience did not even understand what *Clubmark* entailed or the benefits of achieving the accreditation. One ASA officer acknowledged that she was all too aware of the challenges that club volunteers face and, in turn, the challenges the ASA face to get clubs involved in the process. So, in efforts to promote *swim21* she has adopted subtle techniques when approaching certain clubs:

There is a perception from clubs not accredited [with *swim21*] that there will be a ridiculous amount of work and that's the main thing that puts them off. Especially the case for a small club where they don't have many volunteers and their time is already taken up just trying to run the club. But in those cases the approach is to say, "you should have these things [the officer was referring to basic organisational requirements to ensure a club has the ability to be sustainable, some of which are part of the *swim21* criteria] in place, as a club, and if you don't there's bigger concerns than the fact you don't have *swim21* accreditation and we need to address those first" (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15)

Further evidence made it apparent that the ASA were equally aware that if the organisation attempted to force clubs to adopt *swim21*, then it is likely to be met with resistance and potentially result in implementation failure. An opinion that is consistent with Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) tenth condition, which they suggest is required for perfect implementation: that those in authority can demand and obtain perfect compliance. It is suggested, by Hogwood and Gunn, that with major departures from previous practices, the result is that, there is a strong likelihood of suspicion or resistance from those affected. The interview data suggest that the ASA have gained this knowledge from previous experiences:

It is not a necessity [to work towards *swim21*], and it's not enforced upon clubs either, it's very much they have to buy into the process. Clubs that are pushed into the process will fail to see the benefit and they're the ones that come back to us saying 'well what are the benefits for us?' and 'why should we bother?' So, we want them to understand the benefits. (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13)

In addition to reflecting the sentiments of Hogwood and Gunn (1984) when a policy is forced upon the street-level bureaucrats (e.g. club members), the policy would be located in either the *political* or *symbolic* implementation quadrants (due to the high conflict

level), dependent on the level of ambiguity of Matland's (1995) typology. Getting clubs to subscribe to the ethos of *swim21* was a constant challenge for the ASA, who have experienced “peaks and troughs [of club commitment] over the years” (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14). Consequently, this variation of commitment meant that the ASA felt obliged to consistently monitor the accreditation process. The result has seen numerous revisions of the *swim21* framework, designed to overcome local club resistance and make the implementation process less onerous. The different versions of *swim21* will now be discussed in greater detail. Figure 7.2 depicts a summary of the four major revisions of the original version.

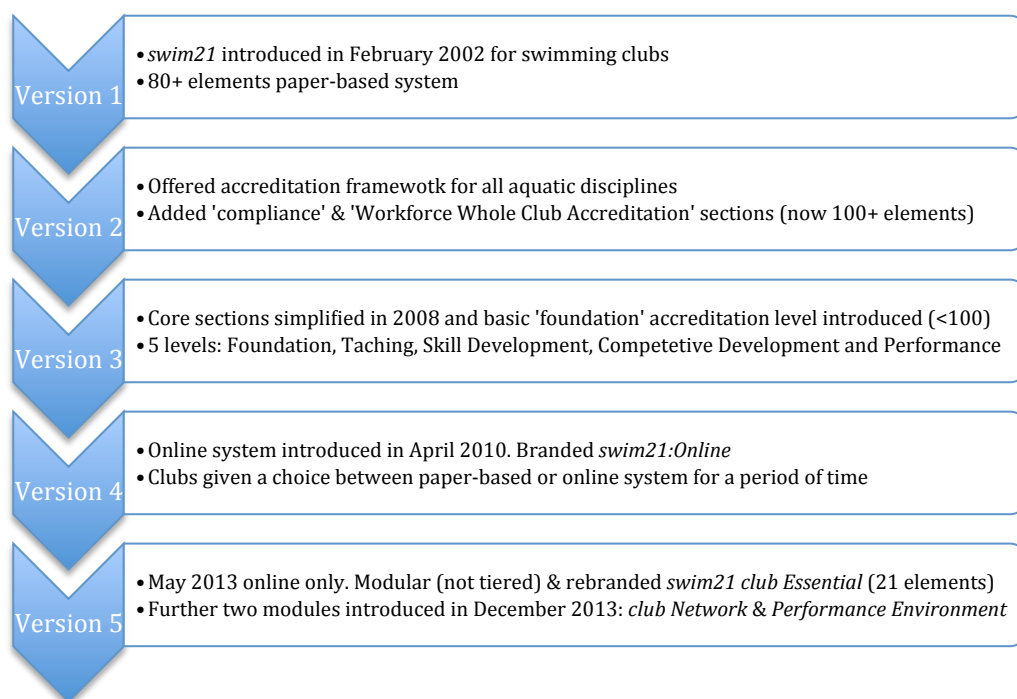


Figure 7.2 Evolution of *swim21* since its introduction in 2002

7.4.1 First version (2002-2006)

The original version of *swim21* contained over 80 elements (see Appendix E) and was purely a paper-based system. Clubs wishing to work towards the accreditation were required to complete an application form; in turn they would receive the *swim21* information pack. The club then set about gathering the required evidence and filing the documentation in A4 box folders. Once all evidence had been successfully collated an ASA staff member, usually an Aquatic Officer (AO), physically visited the club to check and audit the evidence to ensure enough points had been accumulated.

In October 2005 the ASA had a substantial organisation restructure. The five Districts were disbanded and replaced by eight newly formed Regions in line with Sport England's Regions. As part of this new regional structure the role of Regional Development Officers (RDOs) was established. RDO responsibilities included attempting to increase participation; assisting delivery of swimming programmes and helping clubs achieve *swim21*. The RDOs worked alongside AOs supporting clubs to achieve the accreditation but were now the primary point of contact with regard to *swim21*. The introduction of the RDOs is the first indication of the ASA offering capacity building for affiliated clubs working towards the implementation of *swim21*.

A review of the original version of the *swim21* accreditation process was conducted by the ASA during the first four years subsequent to its introduction in 2002. The ASA stated in a guidance document ('Following the *swim21* Accreditation process', published in 2012) the reason that the organisation intended to review the progress of *swim21* was to 'ensure that it was keeping pace with the needs of the sport, the clubs and in particular the needs of the athletes'⁷⁸. This quote reflected the concern within the ASA that *swim21* allowed only partial coverage of the wide range of concerns with club management and service provision.

7.4.2 Second version (2006-2008)

Following the review the original *swim21* accreditation process, the framework received a number of changes. One of which was to incorporate all aquatic disciplines, not just swimming, within the accreditation. In addition to the discipline-specific criteria the ASA produced *swim21 'Compliance'* and '*Workforce Whole Club Accreditation*' (ASA, 2006) evidence matrices that contained a further 28 elements.

The *compliance* elements were designed with the intention of ensuring that an accredited club operated in a safe environment with health and safety, welfare and insurance procedures in place and policies, such as safeguarding, had been adopted and implemented. For those clubs working towards achieving the accreditation standard, evidence had to be collated continuously throughout the process. It was then a requirement for all of these documents to be physically filed and submitted to the ASA for audit. Examples of compliance evidence documents

⁷⁸ http://www.swimming.org/assets/uploads/library/Following_the_swim21_accreditation_process.pdf (Accessed 02.08.15)

included hard copies of certificates (such as DBS⁷⁹ documentation) or teaching, coaching and poolside helper qualifications), treasury reports and forecasts, operating procedures and risk assessments.

The *Compliance* evidence was then combined with additional evidence for each of the aquatic disciplines which each consisted of the further discipline-specific accreditation compliance elements. The process is represented in the flow diagram depicted in Figure 7.3.

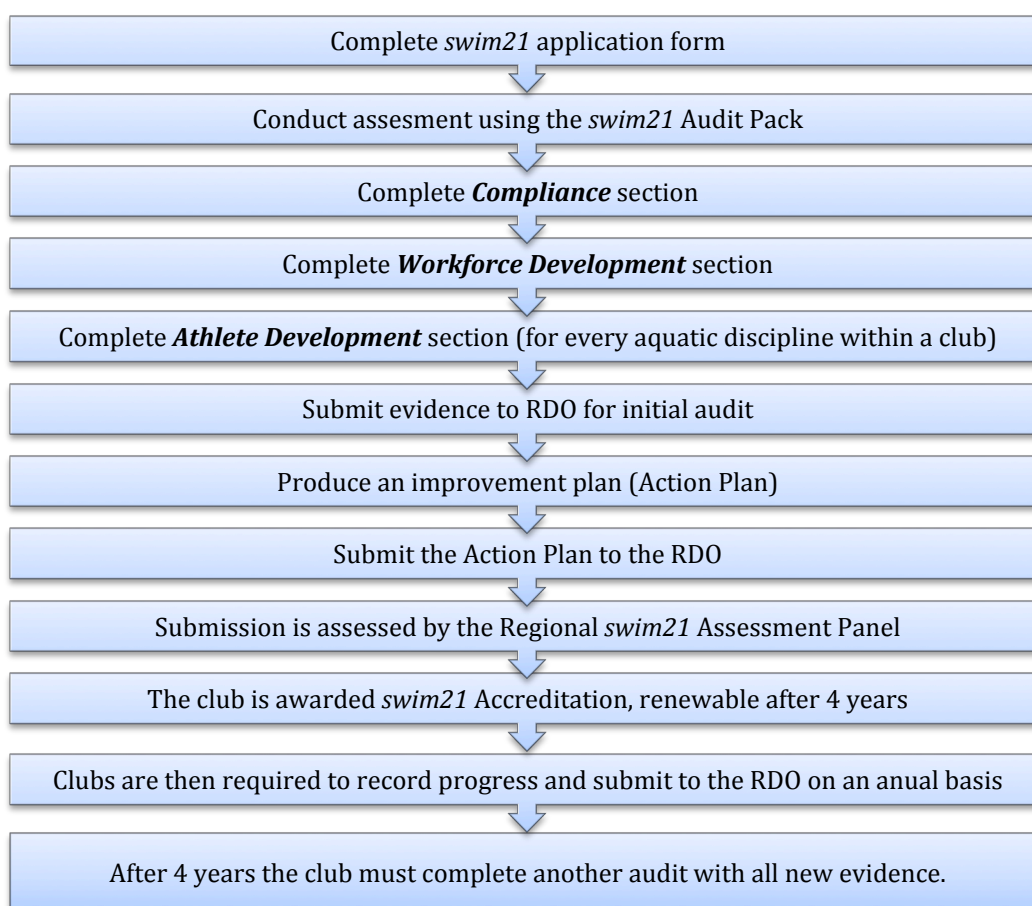


Figure 7.3 Accreditation process of swim21 (version two)

Unfortunately, once *swim21 (version two)* was rolled out to clubs it became apparent that this revision, though comprehensive, had become excessively complicated and time consuming for the swimming club volunteers. Reflecting on the second version of *swim21*, one of the senior ASA officials from the Clubs Team stated that, “if you look at the workload that was involved with *swim21* in the past, actually it was an extremely arduous

⁷⁹ Formerly known as the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

process and we've images of ASA staff carrying lots of A4 box files full of compiled evidence that had been printed...[which resulted in] their car noses pointing slightly up as it was that weighty!" (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14)

Given the feedback from clubs (via helpdesk telephone calls, emails, the Club Survey, and Regional and National Panel/Club Development Group (CDG) meetings) that the process was too complicated and time consuming, the ASA considered it appropriate to commission an independent evaluation of the second version of the *swim21* accreditation process. This is the first indication that the implementation of *swim21* was not as straightforward as the ASA had anticipated; implementation would not follow the classical top-down rational model. The Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy (ISLP), Loughborough University published the report in 2007. The key findings from Hodson and Robinson's (2007) commissioned research found:

- Benefits associated with *swim21* included developing a more professional club and increasing the number of qualified coaches, teachers and volunteers.
- Disadvantages of *swim21* were that the process was slow and time consuming and required significant volunteer commitment. Few interviewees noted direct benefits to swimmers. In addition, there was a perceived need for additional support from the ASA as well as a need for greater promotion of the intended benefits of *swim21*.

From the ISLP research, Hodson and Robinson (2007) suggested a number of recommendations:

- "The benefits of *swim21* needed to be widely communicated to the swimming community through a number of mechanisms.
- The benefits to swimmers as well as clubs must be made clear.
- A review needed to be taken of the bureaucracy of the process. The process had to be less time demanding with regard to the volunteer hours required.
- A review of the resources and support available to clubs seeking *swim21* should be carried out by region." (p. 2)

The ISLP's recommendations are consistent with a classical top-down approach for successful implementation, such as Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) model. The literature suggests that: there needs to be an understanding of, and agreement on, objectives; that adequate time and sufficient resources are made available to the programme; and there is perfect communication and coordination. The recommendations presented to the ASA clearly reflect these conditions.

7.4.3 Third version (2008-2010)

It was apparent that the ASA heeded the feedback from clubs and the ISLP recommendations as in 2008 a further internal review of *swim21* was conducted. The ASA simplified a number of the core sections and tailored the version to recognise the differences between clubs. The revised elements to keep in line with the principles of other ASA programmes (such as Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) – the development pathway tool, for example) with the introduction in 2009 of a ‘*Foundation*’ accreditation level (ASA, 2009, 2011), which was then updated in 2011. Accordingly, with the third version of *swim21*, all affiliated aquatic clubs were able to work towards one or more of five new levels depending on the type of club. The five levels consisted of:

- *Foundation* – the most basic programme designed to help a club of any size and discipline to work towards the quality mark
- *Teaching* – emphasis on quality teaching
- *Skill Development* – aimed to develop technical skills in a quality training environment
- *Competitive Development* - a programme that aimed to produce regional and district level swimmers
- *Performance* – a programme that allowed athletes access to facilities with the aim of producing national level swimmers

If a club only wanted to work towards the minimum requirement of *swim21* (due to limitations of resources or perceived lack of benefit, for example), the number of core compliance elements of the *Foundation* level would be drastically reduced in comparison with the second version of *swim21*. The *Foundation* level consisted of only 17 elements whereas previously clubs had to satisfy 28 ‘*Compliance*’ and ‘*Workforce Whole Club Accreditation*’ elements in addition to the 80 core elements. Although there was a reduction in the number of accreditation elements, implementation of *swim21* (*version three*) continued to be problematic.

We began to realise that with the 5-levels of *swim21* there started to be a bit of a badge of honour [i.e. “our club is at a higher level than yours, we are better than you”, which was not necessarily true: contexts and capacity of some clubs meant they would never have the intention of becoming a ‘*Performance*’ club] and there was a bit of national inconsistency across the clubs. So, you can achieve *swim21 Performance* in, let’s for arguments sake say, Loughborough but that could be completely different when you went down to Portsmouth. They would be doing the same thing but they just didn’t have the same environments so someone would only just hit the criteria, others would be developing above and beyond that. (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13)

In an attempt to improve accreditation consistency, the ASA developed a new accreditation evidence collection method, which will be explained in the subsequent *swim21 (version four)* section. Prior to introducing the fourth version of *swim21*, two auxiliary strands of *swim21* were introduced, in 2009, to complement *version three*.

7.4.3.1 *swim21* Learn to Swim and School Swimming Accreditation

In addition to the ASA *swim21 Club Accreditation* (comprising of *club Essential*, *club Network* and *Performance Environment*), a further two strands of *swim21* were created in 2009 for non-ASA affiliated organisations, such as providers of swimming programmes, private swim schools, leisure operators, local authority leisure centres, private health clubs and school swimming lessons. These were named '*swim21 Learn to Swim*' and '*swim21 School Swimming Accreditation*' and provided a development tool to allow swimmers, teachers, coaches and those responsible for developing programmes to continually improve. Prior to the introduction of *Learn to Swim* and *School Swimming Accreditation*, the ASA's quality assurance for swimming programmes was a system termed *Aquamark*. The *Aquamark* quality scheme involved 150-plus elements, which contained much duplication. The outcome of an internal review of *Aquamark* resulted in amalgamating the system and aligning it with *swim21* because the ASA were happy with the success of the *swim21 Club Accreditation* 'quality mark' and could see potential benefits of combining the two additional *swim21* strands⁸⁰

The *swim21 Learn to Swim* and *School Swimming Accreditation* frameworks consisted of only 56 elements which reduced the paperwork and time commitment but actually helped to improve the quality by aligning it closer to the ASA's National Plan for Teaching Swimming, LTAD and United Kingdom Coaching Certificate (UKCC) qualifications. The supporting resource documentation was also reviewed and updated to support the needs of the industry making accreditation a 'more current and relevant industry tool'⁸¹. The updated support included: a self-assessment tool (to review current state of the organisation); good practice resources; and a team of assessors who visited centres to offer independent advice on ways to improve key areas of the swimming programme, in line with the *swim21* criteria (ASA, 2013).

⁸⁰ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/facilities/swim21-accreditation/> (Accessed 25.02.14)

⁸¹ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/facilities/the-former-aquamark-system/> (Accessed 25.02.14)

7.4.4 Fourth version (2010-2013)

During April 2010 the ASA rolled out '*swim21:Online*'. This version provided clubs with a portal to work towards (and maintain) their accreditation online, rather than collating vast quantities of paper-based evidence for the auditing process. The evidence requirements of this revision were not altered from the third version of *swim21*, only the mode of collection and submission were modified.

One of the ASA interviewees suggested that minimising the volume of paperwork was not the sole reason for introducing the change to an online system. A senior officer offered two further reasons: one that made 'business sense' to the ASA and one that would benefit the clubs. The first point was that the old paper-based system meant that an ASA official [usually a Regional Officer (which, could be either a Regional Development Coordinator (RDC), Regional Club Development Officer (RCDO), Regional Club Support Officer (RCSO) or a Regional Club Coordinator (RCC) dependent on the region they were employed) or one of the nine national Club Development Officers (CDOs)] "had to physically visit the club to look at their evidence, go through the file, which is quite a lengthy piece of work and if we look at the extremes of the organisation, let's take the north-west region then if you're based in Manchester and you've got to visit Cumbria, it's a 4-hour round trip just to look at a folder" (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14). The second point related to the ASA being able to offer quicker feedback with the *swim21:Online* portal. Once a club uploads evidence to their portal the information becomes available for an ASA official to view the documentation. New information was flagged on a club's portal so CDOs, RCDOs and RCCs could view the documentation and provide rapid feedback via text boxes within the portal. The ASA officer could either approve an element, or send it back for review (that is, require additional information).

This real-time formative feedback was designed to speed up the accreditation (or re-accreditation) process. Additionally, it enabled ASA officials to perform routine examination of evidence signed-off by the ROs as another measure in an effort to ensure consistency across regions. The ASA set a protocol for an officer to initial and date an approval of evidence so the routine examination can be managed. Moving the system to an online only portal tied in with Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) ninth condition of needing perfect communication and co-ordination for successful implementation. They suggested that perfect communication is unattainable but management information systems (such as the *swim21:Online* portal) can help matching information flow to needs. Another benefit of moving the system online was that the ASA had the ability to communicate efficiently with

clubs via the portal and over email. For example, as a club nears its re-accreditation the *swim21* coordinator for that club receives an email containing a reminder and step-by-step instructions to follow.

Furthermore, the ASA were pragmatic regarding the implementation of the *swim21:Online* system in 2010 by offering clubs a choice; clubs could either continue using the traditional paper submission system for a period of time or immediately move over to the new online portal. The ASA opted for this approach since they were, “mindful of the age of a high percentage of club volunteers and that they might not be particularly confident with new technology” (Interviewee SC, 12.02.15). One reason Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggest that policy implementation fails is if too much is expected too soon. Offering the transition period was a sensible management strategy.

The previous paper-based system was not only a time consuming process for ASA officials but also meant evidence would not be thoroughly examined and audited until months into the process. As a consequence, this added increased pressures on volunteers who often had to produce additional, or amend, evidence if the criteria had not been achieved. In turn, these issues caused delays for some clubs in achieving their accreditation status, or worse, experience implementation failure and not become a *swim21*-accredited club.

7.4.5 Fifth version (2013-December 2015)

More recently, *swim21* received a further review, which resulted in a major overhaul of the framework. This new version was rebranded ‘*swim21 club Essential*’, available as an online only programme; the paper submission option was withdrawn.

7.4.5.1 *swim21 club Essential*

In 2012, the ASA organised consultation meetings with the *swim21* National Panel⁸² to receive and discuss club feedback in relation to the accreditation process. The most common feedback from these meetings was that the complexity of the accreditation process continued to be excessive for some club volunteers, and the tiered system still was not relevant to all clubs (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13). It was this information that drove the ASA to initiate the latest revision of *swim21*. Referring to Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams framework when considering *swim21*, it could be said that it was unclear to the

⁸² The National Panel consists of designated club members to represent swimming clubs, volunteers and ASA officials

ASA and many clubs what 'problem' *swim21* was attempting to solve for the problem stream. The policy stream was that *swim21* was based on SE's generic framework, which meant solving a problem for SE and that there was a lack of a supportive mood for the political stream.

This most recent version (*swim21 club Essential*) is the fundamental module, which was launched in May 2013. The principal change to *swim21* was that it now comprised a three-module system, rather than the previous five-tiered accreditation approach (where clubs were able to work towards one or all five levels). There was also a substantial reduction in the evidence required and instead of the accreditation lasting for four years it lasted for one year that was subject to an Annual Health Check (AHC).

The purpose of the revision to the framework was to recognise quality in all aquatic clubs and not make a distinction between accredited clubs. For example, with the tiered system, one club could have been working towards *Foundation* while another club worked towards *Competitive Development*; the general perception was that the club working towards *Competitive Development* was a superior club and often gained considerable prestige. The National Panel⁸³ feedback suggested clubs with *Foundation* level felt pressured into attempting to work towards the next level, even if the higher level was not particularly relevant to their club, or the club's resources (volunteer manpower) were limited, making it difficult to achieve. The ASA official involved in this revision of *swim21* explained:

They [the modules] are all interconnected, like with a degree programme [for example]. But it's not a stepping stone process, you're not getting higher through [the process like previous versions of *swim21*], it's an equivalent level. So, there's core elements that are there to build your club to make sure you've got a development plan...meaning you can understand where there are gaps and where there's opportunities and actually, it's a bit of a pat on the back for a lot of clubs to say you're doing certain things particularly well. (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13)

In June 2013 the *swim21* accreditation consisting of the five levels (tiers) ceased to exist; clubs working towards *swim21* accreditation had to transfer their evidence to work towards the new '*swim21 club Essential* matrix of evidence' and those clubs applying for reaccreditation after June 2013 were also required to use the new matrix. By removing the tiered system, and the perceived prestige hierarchy that became associated with it, the

⁸³ As of January 2015 the National Panel became known as the Club Development Group (CDG).

modular system became relevant to a greater number of clubs. *swim21 club Essential* is the central quality assurance module. It sets out to develop volunteers, support clubs to grow their membership and ensure the sustainability of activity in line with the objectives of an aquatic club.⁸⁴

Unfortunately, the same transition approach (adopted when the ASA introduced *swim21:Online*) was not followed for the initial implementation of *swim21 club Essential* (*version five*). When this new framework was introduced the ASA made it mandatory for clubs to transfer to the new *swim21 club Essential* accreditation. This was problematic for some clubs. For example, a club that had recently achieved the accreditation standard in 2012 would have been under the impression their accreditation was to last four years (providing they continued to satisfy the AHCs and audits); in fact, these clubs found out that they had to submit a set of completely new evidence that satisfied the *swim21 club Essential* accreditation criteria. A senior official at the ASA stated, “the NGB now recognise that the transition process should have been addressed differently. Since that period we have spent a lot of time fire fighting and regaining trust with a number of clubs.” (Interviewee SC, 12.02.15)

The senior ASA official was referring to the (circa 100) clubs who decided not to work (or continue working) towards achieving *swim21* accreditation having previously achieved the preceding standard of *swim21:Online*. Nevertheless, the official reported that since the drop in numbers, there has been an upward trend in clubs working towards *swim21 club Essential*. The likely reason for such a poor introduction of *swim21 club Essential* was because it appeared that there was no real ownership of the policy and no clear allocation of the responsibility of its implementation within the ASA when it was introduced. The new version of the accreditation was introduced in early 2013 but the Clubs Team within the ASA was not inaugurated until August 2013. It emerged that the outgoing (disbanded) management of *swim21* made the decision of offering zero flexibility for clubs that had recently achieved their accreditation, and it was left to the new team to confront the dissatisfaction and resistance from club members in relation to the change in policy.

The ASA’s key principles of *swim21 club Essential* were to ensure that: the framework became a multi-discipline accreditation; provided continued commitment to achieve equity targets throughout aquatic sports; and supported clubs in the shared objective of widening the participation base and in turn the performance of the sport as a whole. The

⁸⁴ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/swim21-accreditation> (Accessed 08.01.13)

swim21 club Essential module now aimed to be relevant for all ASA affiliated clubs. Previously, swimming clubs and water polo clubs part of the same club, for example, may have each wanted to work towards accreditation. However, the water polo club would only be able to work towards certain accreditation tiers because many of the compliance criteria were not relevant to that discipline. Now, *swim21 club Essential* was an accreditation that could be adopted by all aquatic clubs, no matter what the discipline (see Appendix F).

Another important observation regarding the update was in relation to the actual number of elements within the *swim21* framework. The fourth revision (the tiered *swim21:Online* version) consisted of more than one hundred elements while the current version, *swim21 club Essential*, consists of only 21 elements for the most basic foundation module. One member from TSC suggested this fourth version “was just becoming unwieldy” (Interviewee SAA, 09.02.14). Whether this reduction is a compromise by the ASA or whether it can be seen as broad reshaping of *swim21* (where the ASA have taken a pragmatic approach in an attempt to ensure improved implementation success), the modification to the number of elements was substantial. On one hand, the reduction could be perceived as policy dilution. Although SE did not set targets for the number of accredited clubs it was the preference of the ASA to have as many affiliated clubs as possible achieve the accreditation status. Therefore, by diluting the framework it would be expected that more clubs would be able to successfully implement *swim21*, which would reflect positively on the ASA when having review meetings with SE. On the other hand, a more generous view would be that it was a precise and effective tailoring of the *swim21* framework to simplify the process with the aim of benefitting clubs by making it less time consuming for the club volunteer members. Crucially, although the reduction of elements was radical the minimum requirements of SE’s generic *Clubmark* criteria were still satisfied. Furthermore, interview data suggested that the decision to reduce the number of elements was not solely driven by the ASA senior management; concerns about the substantial number of required elements, which had to be satisfied was often expressed to the CDOs by club members during routine club meetings (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13).

In addition to the large reduction in the number of elements, the five revisions of *swim21* - each revision also primarily initiated as a result of club feedback (i.e. ‘arduous process’ and ‘excessively time consuming’) - could too be viewed as policy dilution, given the number of revisions. The empirical evidence indicated that throughout the first four major revisions of *swim21* the number of accreditation elements (within each framework) did, in

fact, continue to increase. This would suggest that policy dilution did not occur. In fact, with the increasing number of elements throughout each of the first four versions it would suggest that the ASA were reinforcing the policy. However, with *swim21 club Essential (version five)* containing significantly fewer accreditation elements, there is a case to suggest dilution as the process has become much simpler but it is a move the ASA are willing to undertake for more effective implementation.

A more positive view would be that, over time, the ASA have developed their knowledge and negotiated the best approach for implementation of *swim21*. One method by which the ASA have done this is by establishing the Informatics department, which is the internal research and insight team. Another technique the ASA have used to develop knowledge is by implementing a feedback strategy through a number of clubs (a mix of supportive and the more sceptical), as one of the senior ASA officials explained:

We have a 'test and learn' process. We went out to 12 clubs for the test and learn [of *version five*]. They came back and fed their information back, we made some changes and then we're ready to launch the programme. (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13)

When STSC originally worked towards *swim21 (version two)* in 2006 the club found it "fairly easy to develop *swim21* because of the systems the club already had in place" (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14). Yet, found it hugely frustrating due to the amount of cross-referencing that was required between the various sections within *swim21*. The club volunteers found this difficult to complete on the grounds of lacking time to collect the vast amounts of evidence required (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14).

In the first instance (referring to *version one*) both clubs in this study perceived *swim21* as yet another increase in paperwork that the ASA expected clubs to complete. However, over time, TSC and STSC became accepting of the fact that achieving *swim21* could potentially bring benefits to the clubs, as one interviewee noted:

When it [*swim21*] first came out it wasn't really taken on by committee, it was done by one person who just did all the work and it was a bit of a tick box exercise. When I took over from him...what I tried to do over the next four years is to actually make sure that those people with the roles know what to do according to *swim21* and do those as a minimum...so it's actually become a useful tool for making sure that the club: 1) runs smoothly, 2) develops appropriately and 3) is sort of protected liability wise as best you can ever nowadays (Interviewee SAA, 09.02.14)

Although TSC originally used *swim21* as a ‘tick box exercise’ by completing the minimal requirements, over time, the club members have developed their knowledge to enable them to use *swim21* as developmental framework. The comment (above) from the TSC committee member clearly demonstrates the importance of the role that the club-level policy actors play in determining the success of policy implementation. If club members do not fully cooperate with the official goals and process, then implementation will likely suffer displacement, or failure.

In contrast to the early versions of *swim21*, one of the longstanding STSC members explained that the current version “is much more streamlined than previous versions” (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14). Although there is evidence that the reduction of elements within *swim21* is what clubs had been demanding, one STSC member believed that the ASA had actually reduced the framework too much:

swim21 has lost its edge. It’s been too watered down. There isn’t a coaching section in the current version [*fifth version*]. We monitor coaches to athlete ratio; that’s important so you can identify the number of coaching staff you need but that’s not a requirement anymore. (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14)

However, one of the ASA officials explained the rationale for omitting the coaching evidence, which previously had to be uploaded on a weekly basis:

Yes, OK, we want to make sure clubs are delivering the right session but anyone could upload a session plan and then deliver something different so it doesn’t mean anything to us does it actually? We have to remember they are qualified coaches so we’ve checked and challenged that they are qualified coaches or teachers. Therefore, we should be confident in our own training system to know that they are delivering what the ASA expects. (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14)

It is understandable that the ASA should have removed the coaching section; examining session plans for every club would have been a time consuming process and detracted from the wider supporting role of the ASA officers. Nevertheless, one individual from STSC did perceive this modification as policy dilution but also appreciated the fact that the ASA had gone to efforts to simplify the accreditation process. Similarly, all members interviewed from TSC embraced the new simplified modular approach.


With *swim21* in its fifth version it is a clear demonstration that the ASA had to adopt a flexible implementation strategy. Referring to Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict model the evidence suggested that, over time, the location of the *swim21* policy has moved from

one quadrant to another. For example, when *swim21* (*version two and three*) were introduced there was conflict over goals between the ASA and many clubs, which resulted in compliance not being automatically forthcoming. This would have placed the policy in the *political* implementation quadrant (or, even *symbolic* implementation for clubs that felt there was an ostensibly implausible combination of goals and means). Furthermore, by virtue of the number of versions, at times the policy was located in the *experimental* implementation quadrant. Matland suggests that, “the emphasis on seeing each iteration of a policy as an experiment is important when one evaluates possible pitfalls to the implementation process” (p. 167). Feedback (from the clubs) and evaluation are fundamental for effective learning. Throughout this chapter it will be shown how the ASA officials developed their knowledge through an increasing number of feedback channels.

7.4.5.2 Annual Clubmark Health Check

With *swim21 club Essential* accreditation, rather than continuing with the four-year reaccreditation renewal process, the AHC was introduced. The primary reason was an attempt by the ASA to keep a better track of information; important for top-down implementation success. Initially, as expected, this more frequent check was met with much resistance from club members, which is what Hogwood and Gunn (1984) described was likely to happen with a major departure from a previous policy due to the high probability of suspicion from affected individuals or groups.

As the ASA received more feedback, mostly negative, from club members it offered a degree of flexibility to assist clubs with the transition to the new annual revalidation process. One ASA Officer explained the change, “what we’ve said is that for [*swim21 club Essential*], a lot of evidence can be reused; if there haven’t been any personnel or document changes to the club but the information is required, they don’t have to collect new evidence and we make sure clubs are aware of this from the outset” (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15). The AHC document consisted of the same 21 elements that made up the *swim21 club Essential* matrix but there were columns that specified whether new evidence was required in addition to clear guidance notes. For the resubmission only four elements (of the 21) required new uploads every year; everything else (as long as information has not changed) could be reused from the previous year. This cuts down hours of work for the volunteers. Figure 7.4 depicts the requirements for the first two elements.



swim21 club Essential
Annual Health Check Requirements

Please ensure that evidence is submitted against each element for revalidation purposes even if utilising the “re-use button”

	ELEMENT	YOUR CLUB SHOULD SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING AS EVIDENCE	ANNUAL HEALTH CHECK		SUPPORTING GUIDANCE
			Reuse previous	New upload required	
6	1	Club development plan detailing the Clubs objective and four year objectives with annual action plan	x	√	Existing Template/Document can be reused, however up to date information must be added i.e. action plan
	2	Club annual budget and four year forecast	x	√	Existing Template/Document can be reused, however up to date information must be added i.e. annual budget

Figure 7.4 Annual Health Check matrix

7.4.5.3 swim21 club Network and swim21 Performance Environment

In December 2013 the ASA began to roll out two additional modules, which focused on athlete pathway and club networks. The aim of the first additional module, branded ‘swim21 club Network’, is part of the ASA’s strategy to ‘quality assure’ clubs who work collaboratively to deliver the athlete pathway in their area. It aims to assist in identifying gaps in provision and opportunities available for clubs to increase and sustain membership⁸⁵. *swim21 club Network* was designed to support movement through the pathway to ensure that athletes fulfil their potential and are retained in the sport. It is agreed between accredited clubs to work towards the following objectives:

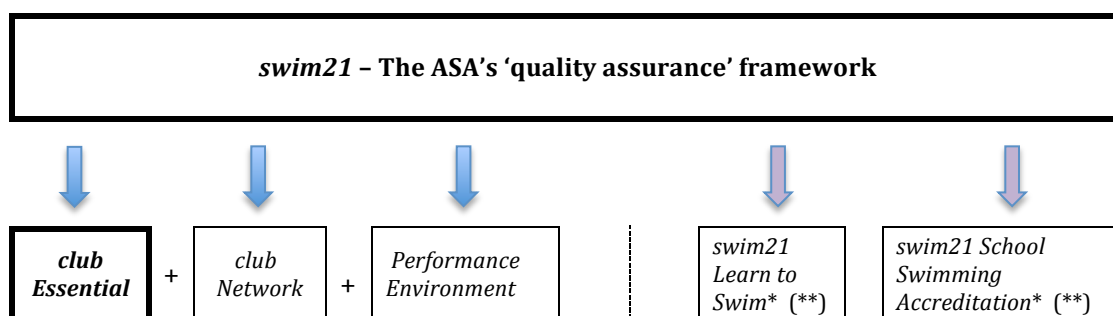
- To retain and increase ASA club members
- To retain and increase volunteers, teachers, coaches and officials
- To raise the standards of performance across appropriate aquatic disciplines

As part of the ASA’s promotion of *swim21 club Network*, the organisation produced a document (ASA, 2013b) stating the potential benefits to clubs wishing to work towards the module. To achieve *swim21 Network* status a club must work towards seven elements. However, the numbers of elements that required completion were then reduced from seven to three. An ASA officer suggested, “feedback was that we were asking clubs to do things for doing sake so following the [inaugural] Club Development Group meeting last week we decided that it would now stipulate which elements are *essential* and which are *desirable* criteria elements on the matrix” (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15). This is, again, further evidence of club-led feedback, resulting in simplification of policy.

⁸⁵ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/swim21-accreditation> (Accessed 08.01.13)

The second additional module, termed '*swim21 Performance Environment*', aimed to provide a benchmark for clubs coaching high-level athletes across all four aquatic disciplines (swimming, diving, water polo and synchronised swimming). Information on the ASA website states that this third module 'is awarded to those clubs who can demonstrate that the pathways, physical environment, coaching practices and support services are all in place for athletes to reach the pinnacle of their aquatic sport, and that the club has historical evidence, to illustrate athletes regularly achieve success through this performance programme'⁸⁶.

For a club aiming to achieve *swim21 Performance Environment* there is an expectation by the ASA that the club be part of a *swim21 club Network*. Figure 7.5 depicts the modular approach to the latest version of *swim21*.



* Both combine as the ASA's *swim21 Learn to Swim Accreditation* programme, which were part of the now defunct *Aquamark* quality mark

** No longer part of *swim21* as of January 2015; moved to align with SE's Quest programme

Figure 7.5 The ASA's modular approach to its 'quality assurance' under the umbrella term of *swim21*

Following the introduction of the two additional modules (*club Network* and *Performance Environment*) a significant number of changes were made to the online portal since it was only being utilised for *swim21 club Essential*. One ASA official said, "to be honest, it's been quite problematic over the last few months to make sure the portal is fit for purpose but we think we're there with it now" (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15). One noteworthy alteration to the *Performance* section, within the online portal, was that the ASA restricted CDOs (and the ROs) access to certain elements. Due to the nature of the accreditation section, the plan is for the ASA Talent Team to be introduced and trained to use the portal meaning they can approve and sign off the specific *Performance* elements. Here, the ASA were using

⁸⁶ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/swim21-accreditation> (Accessed 08.01.13)

management information systems in an attempt to ensure clear and unambiguous communication, control and coordination.

Since January 2015, there have been two additional minor alterations associated with *swim21* accreditation. First, as mentioned previously, the National Panel has now become the CDG, where a *swim21* panel is part of that group. The quarterly meetings continue except are a full day in duration rather than a few hours. Second, the ASA have formed a partnership with 'Right Directions', the organisation that manage Sport England's Quest programme, in an attempt to make *Learn to Swim Accreditation* more accessible. Quest is the 'UK Quality Scheme for Sport and Leisure' and is a tool for continuous improvement, designed primarily for the management of leisure facilities and leisure development⁸⁷. The ASA rebranded *swim21 Learn to Swim Accreditation* to *ASA Learn to Swim Accreditation* (replaced the word *swim21* with ASA) and is no longer encompassed by *swim21*.

Information on the ASA's website does indicate that the ASA have gained knowledge from previous mistakes; *swim21 Learn to Swim Accreditation* is being phased out, not forcing groups straight onto the new system in the way the ASA did introducing *swim21 (version five)* in 2013. For example, sites that have achieved *swim21 Learn to Swim Accreditation* have been automatically awarded the new *ASA Learn to Swim Accreditation*, *swim21* sites will maintain this until their accreditation expires under the *swim21* terms and conditions and are able to continue using the original documentation. Once their current accreditation expires, they will then be able to apply for the *ASA Learn to Swim Accreditation* using the updated Quest criteria⁸⁸.

7.5 The ASA Clubs Team

In addition to the overhaul from a tiered system to a modular system and a reduction of the number of elements, the ASA altered their organisational structure to provide increased support to clubs. In 2011, the Chief Executive re-launched the ASA's commitment to its clubs and members. Two years later, a new round of SE funding allowed the appointment of a new ASA Club Development Team that could focus on club development within the 2013–17 ASA Strategic Objectives, which were 'to build, develop and maintain a quality sustainable club network that meets the needs of the community it

⁸⁷ <http://www.questnbs.org> (Accessed 12.08.15)

⁸⁸ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/facilities/the-former-aquamark-system/> (Accessed 02.08.15)

serves'⁸⁹. The ASA Clubs Team was formed in August 2013 to offer support to ASA member organisations across England. At the time of writing the team consists of eight officers across the country and has a focus on: growing clubs to ensure future sustainability, growth in membership and a raise in quality of clubs through *swim21*. The National CDOs work alongside the various RO roles to ensure there is constant club representation across all levels of the sport.

7.5.1 Inauguration of the Clubs Team

The creation of the Clubs Team, in August 2013, enabled the ASA to provide a capacity-building support structure consistent with a top-down implementation model. The structure is illustrated in figure 7.6.

Through club feedback and ISLP findings the following were identified by the ASA as primary reasons for clubs not achieving the accreditation standard, which were: a lack of a full understanding of the requirements of *swim21*; a failure to appreciate the benefits of achieving the accreditation; time constraints; and the bureaucratic nature of the process (Hodson & Robinson, 2007). With the introduction of the Clubs Team enabled CDOs and the various ROs to guide clubs through the accreditation process, offering increased support, which has recently helped an increased number of clubs implement and achieve the *swim21* standard compared with the previous few years, “the trend is once again moving in the right direction” one ASA official remarked (Interviewee SC, 12.02.15).

⁸⁹ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/what-we-do/> (Accessed 02.08.15)

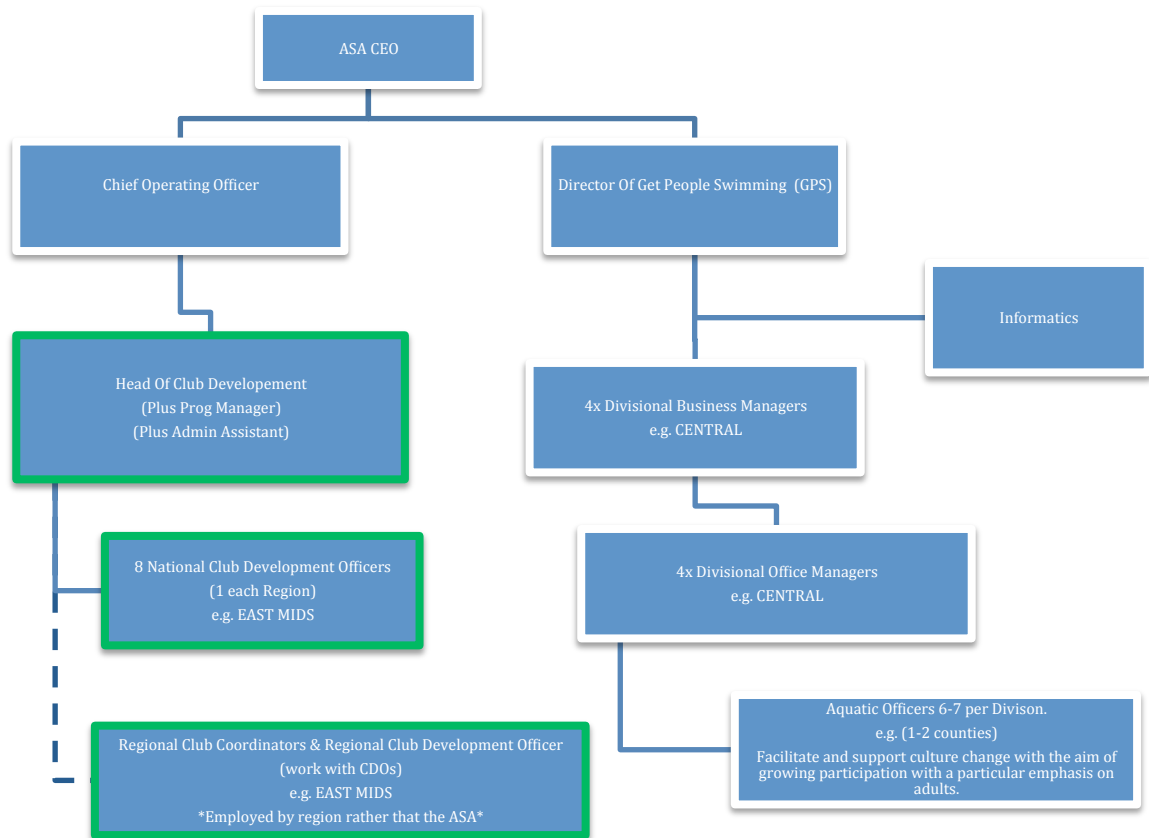


Figure 7.6 The Clubs Team within the ASA structure

7.5.2 Management of *swim21*

In July 2014 a new role was established in the ASA dedicated to managing *swim21* (11 months after the Clubs Team was created). Evidence suggested that this was a key role in the successful implementation of *swim21*; by virtue of the ASA's improved management and knowledge of *swim21*, online portal monitoring, and top-down communication and coordination. Not only did the role provide improved communication and support for club members working towards *swim21* accreditation (via up-to-date resource documentation on the ASA website/online portal), the role provided an improved coordination within the ASA. For example, weekly ASA team updates are emailed to the eight CDOs and the 12-14 ROs every Friday to ensure a consistent message across the team. Email content includes information, such as, notifications of the constant minor adjustments made to the online portal so CDOs/ROs had the ability to answer enquiries from club members, and sharing of cases of clubs that are examples of good (or bad) practice. Regarding the aspect of consistency, the CDO in the region conducted weekly meetings with the ROs to ensure all three were delivering consistent messages and levels of support.

7.5.3 Importance of club volunteers

An important point to note is the role that club volunteers (the low-level policy actors equivalent to Lipsky's (1980) street-level bureaucrats) play in implementing *swim21*. If the club members do not buy into the accreditation process, implementation will not achieve intended goals. For many years club members could not see the benefit of achieving *swim21* accreditation status, it was often the case that clubs would attempt to achieve only minimum compliance, usually perceived as bureaucratic box ticking exercise. If a club, such as TSC, consisted of members who could see the benefits of implementing *swim21* and were willing to adopt new (or modified) practices, then implementation was closer to the ideal of the top-down approach. Consequently, the importance of education is clear and is recognised by the ASA. One official noted, "the important thing is that a club buys into the process [i.e. become educated and accepting of the process]. If they don't want to do it or can't be bothered to do it, then I won't waste my time. If I just did it [evidence collection] for them in a year's time, when it comes round to Health Check, they won't be interested or prepared to be involved again as they won't see the value" (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15).

In addition, the occupational backgrounds of club volunteers play an important role in determining the successful implementation of *swim21*. During interviews it was made clear on a number of occasions that both clubs assigned volunteer roles to individuals who had some relevant prior experience. For example, TSC allocated an accountant as treasurer; a schoolteacher as welfare officer; and a General Practitioner oversaw the management of implementation. Likewise, STSC matched volunteer positions the best they could to their occupational backgrounds and the planning of *swim21* implementation was organised by a retired civil engineering project manager. He noted, "my background is quality management systems so I appreciate that *swim21* is recording what we do to help develop our swimmers and our club" (Interviewee SBA, 29.07.14). This background familiarity helped the case study clubs to cope with understanding the policy documentation and templates provided by the ASA.

Further evidence that the ASA understood the important role club members played in successful implementation was the inauguration of the ASA Club Conference in 2014, hosted across four locations in England. The conference provided an opportunity for the ASA and club representatives to discuss how they can work together to drive the sport's future development. Establishing this annual conference has provided clubs with an opportunity to discuss issues face-to-face with the ASA, improving top-down and bottom-

up communication channel. This undertaking goes some way towards satisfying one of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) preconditions that called for perfect communication and co-ordination. One senior ASA official suggested that the conference gives the ASA chance to educate members about the processes of developing *swim21* and hopefully minimise the 'ivory tower' narrative. The conference provides the ASA an opportunity to explain that *swim21* "goes out for consultation with the wider swimming community rather than it just being, as we sometimes hear, "people from the ASA sat in an ivory tower saying this is what has to be put in place", but ultimately it's guided by *Clubmark*" (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14).

Another tactic used by one of the ASA officials in an attempt to obtain compliance is by displaying recognition of the important role that club volunteers perform in successful implementation of *swim21*. The official explained, "for a new club I think it's [*swim21*] best introduced on a personal level. I'd offer to go and meet with the *swim21* coordinator and go through element-by-element what the actual requirements are and then they'd be responsible for collecting the evidence to meet the set criteria" (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15).

7.5.4 CDO level of support

Evidence suggested that CDOs offer varying levels of support to clubs. For example, if a club is either new to the accreditation process or apprehensive due to a perceived lack of capacity, then CDOs can upload information onto the portal on their behalf as one ASA officer explained "I've lifted the constitution off their website, found their training plan on their website, which is one of the elements, and uploaded it for them when in a meeting with them just to enable me to show them how easy it is. And that they already have most of the information prepared – it's just a click of a button". She continued suggesting that, "it's our role [as a Clubs Team officer] to understand the level of support we can physically provide but also to quickly recognise which clubs require a little bit more hands on guidance" (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15). This is a good example to indicate the level of adaptation demonstrated by ASA; the official modified the implementation strategy of *swim21* to suit the local context (and capacity of the volunteers), which is the area of focus that Lipsky (1980) suggested is fundamental for understanding implementation.

7.5.5 Development of ASA knowledge

Subsequent to the introduction of *swim21* (*version two*) the ASA gradually acquired knowledge (via club feedback) to enable them to negotiate the most suitable accreditation framework for its members: *swim21* (*version three*) attempted to simplify a number of core elements and improve relevance to all aquatic disciplines (yet, it continued to consist of a large number of criteria); *swim21* (*version four*) moved the accreditation online and *swim21* (*version five*) altered the accreditation to a modular, rather than the various levels approach. These developments of ASA knowledge and the evolution of *swim21* through various means of negotiation fit well with the implementation analysis of a policy-action dialectic, which is said to involve negotiation and bargaining between policy makers and the implementing agents (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Barrett, 2004). Finally moving the system from a paper-based system to an online platform is an example of a change in policy as a process.

With the current version of *swim21* (*version five*) the ASA started to receive positive feedback from club members; “a lot of clubs who are in process [of implementing *swim21*] are usually surprised at the ease of the process, particularly those who had completed the old system” remarked one of the ASA’s officials (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15). Club data from this study reiterates the point that the new process is an improvement in comparison with previous *swim21* versions, which demonstrates top-down success but also that the ASA have had to accept adaption of implementation technique. A recent method the ASA adopted to receive further club feedback was by adding *swim21* specific questions to the annual Club Survey, which is sent via email to every affiliated-club secretary for a response (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15).

7.5.5.1 Club capacity and course attendance

The ASA have become aware, over time, of the differential capacity clubs possess. One method by which the ASA dealt with the capacity issue was the creation of the Clubs Team in an attempt to offer increased support to clubs through CDOs, assisted by local RCDOs/RCCs. This difference in capacity was evident between the two clubs in this case study. Although STSC are fully accredited, a lack of capacity, in some instances, and nature of their environment affected implementation of *swim21*. For example, sourcing cover for poolside volunteers who were attending courses (one of the requirements of *swim21*), which were often a distance from where STSC is located, cancellation of courses due to low numbers (running courses is an income stream for the ASA so are often cancelled if

not financially viable) and aligning practices with ASA suggestions (such as evidence templates) caused issues. This comment from a STSC committee member confirms a number of these issues:

When we do get someone booked on a training course, it tends to slip. Because either the course is too far away [STSC is based in a rural part of the East Midlands region] or the course is cancelled because there aren't sufficient numbers. So, it does get a bit frustrating on that front. (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14)

While reiterating the point in relation to the difficulties experienced in attending courses, a committee member of STSC explained how, in some instances, the committee members interpreted various requirements of the *swim21* criteria as a coping strategy for their lack of capacity:

We tend to modify them [the accreditation elements and tasks] to suit the club because with us being a small club, we don't have the resources at times to deliver what the ASA are looking for throughout their programme. One thing we do find difficult is courses for people. They tend to be spread all over the country and unfortunately they tend to be in the evenings when the parents [volunteers] are trying to get their children to training. Or, during the day when the volunteers are at work. (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14)

Modifying policy replicates Lipsky's (1980) analysis of the practices of 'street level bureaucrats' whereby, individuals transform a policy during its implementation to suit the conditions and constraints of their local environment. STSC's interpretation and manipulation of the *swim21* requirements differed from those of the TSC members who followed the requirements exactly as the ASA intended. This disclosure from STSC demonstrates how club members are capable of manipulating elements of *swim21* to fit their own agenda.

TSC does have a larger member base and an increased committee size in comparison with STSC. This meant that TSC did not experience the same course booking and attendance difficulties as STSC experienced due to the fact the club had the capacity to cover individuals whilst attending courses. In addition, courses were less frequently cancelled: courses in close proximity to large cities have a propensity to be well subscribed unlike courses located in more rural areas.

With regard to the problem of attending courses, which caused STSC (and others) problems in achieving *swim21* accreditation, the ASA officials admitted that they were aware of the issue. Using the *Time to Listen* course (which focuses on child safeguarding)

as an example: the ASA created their own swimming-specific material for the course to provide the highest quality training for attendees. Currently, the ASA have eight tutors, nationally, who are trained to deliver the swimming-specific course. However, due to the fact the content is owned by the CPSU, new tutors have to be trained by the CPSU. Unfortunately, training is not provided on a regular basis, which, in the past, has left the ASA waiting for the CPSU to run orientation sessions where ASA officials are trained. As a consequence, the ASA have not been able to meet the demand for *Time to Listen* courses. The knock on effect has resulted in some club welfare officers not being able to attend the course (a *swim21* requirement) prior to submission to the Regional Panel. Therefore, the club has not achieved accreditation or revalidation if it was the AHC. To address this implementation difficulty the ASA introduced a 12-month grace period that was applied to the *Time to Listen* criteria. As one ASA official explained, “if we receive a signed letter from a welfare officer to state their commitment that they’ll attend a suitable course within the next 12-months then we can provide them an extension as it’s not their fault we can’t deliver a course because we haven’t got a tutor” (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15). This extension procedure was discussed and decided at the National Panel/CDG meetings and is only adopted if the welfare officer had attempted to book onto the course.

An additional three-month grace period has also been introduced for any clubs engaged in the *swim21* process and that experience an event (such as, a volunteer involved with *swim21* suffering a bereavement), which makes it difficult for that club to submit the evidence within the given deadline. A club is only given this extension for legitimate reasons; it is not granted for clubs who are simply not accepting of the *swim21* process and miss the scheduled audits.

7.5.5.2 ASA capacity and lack of course tutors

Clearly the ASA have not suffered from lack of capacity in offering clubs support but have experienced difficulties with Hogwood and Gunn’s (1984) first condition for successful implementation; circumstances external to the implementing agency have imposed crippling constraints. For instance, delays with the training of ASA course tutors caused by being dependent on the CPSU. However, the ASA have attempted to overcome this difficulty with the introduction of the grace period.

In other situations, ASA officers have made efforts to manage their time to ensure they are able to provide the support that clubs require for implementation of *swim21*. During an

interview with an official from the Clubs Team the question was asked “how would they cope if a large number of clubs required this type of support simultaneously?” The response was that “the *swim21* panels are every three months. So, for example, if there was a club that had all the evidence prepared I’d prioritise them [to present their evidence for approval at Regional Panel] over a club that needed a bit more developmental work and support. So, I could then spread their support over two or three panel periods [6-9 months] to get them ready for Panel submission” (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15).

Another technique the officer adopts to ensure sufficient club support is delivered is to piggyback *swim21* support sessions onto pre-existing informal club network meetings. These meetings take place in a central location, usually with five to eight clubs, chaired by a CDO, to share knowledge and ideas of best practice. CSP officers are also invited to attend. The clubs attending do not have to be *swim21 Network* accredited. In fact, clubs do not have to hold *swim21 club Essential* accreditation but should be working towards the standard. Part of the ASA’s rationale for inviting clubs working towards gaining accreditation is so that the members from unaccredited clubs can discuss potential apprehensions with clubs members that have completed the process.

7.5.5.3 Portal issues

Further to the physical capacity issues that have been experienced by VSCs there have also been online issues. One of the more recent online portal updates, that did not have a ‘test and learn’ process, which caused frustrations, as one TSC member explained:

It’s a bit of a pain. On the old *swim21* website, you could just add a file [for evidence] and that was it but you now have to add it in a zipped file. So, you’ve got to take down the file that was on there and make sure you’ve got all of your files appropriately highlighted, zip them and upload it onto the site - you can’t just add a new file, which is a pain to be honest and it is a bit of a bind. (Interviewee SAA, 09.02.14)

Once again, the ASA were seen to react to feedback from the clubs (rather than be proactive) and have now established a *swim21* portal test site as one ASA official explained, “the test site is where we rigorously test any changes. But it’s been ridiculously time consuming, to be honest, although it now appears to work effectively. There are now daily/weekly tweaks we make to the portal to ensure it functions effectively” (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15).

7.5.5.4 Ensuring consistency of the award of *swim21*

The ASA conduct a multi-level crosschecking procedure to ensure national consistency. Initially CDOs, RCDOs and RCCs receive internal training. Then, a club's submission is taken to Regional Panel for verification of randomly selected evidence. It is then finally validated at a National Panel/CDG review, which occurs four times a year (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13).

Since the introduction of the CDG, in January 2015, a new evidence crosscheck process has been introduced. Completed *swim21* submissions from two randomly selected clubs in each region, selected by the regional chair, now have every single piece of criteria evidence examined by the respective Regional Panel's and the CDG chair then randomly spot checks submitted evidence from a handful of clubs, which have been validated by the Regional Panels.

7.5.6 Templates

In a further attempt to achieve consistency templates and guidance notes for every single element of *swim21 club Essential* were available on the portal and the ASA website.⁹⁰ The online templates were not mandatory for clubs but were recommended and accepted that, "it probably makes it easier for the ASA to then approve evidence [if templates are used], just from a consistency point of view" (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15). During interviews with other ASA officials it was obvious how satisfied they were with the quantity and the level of detail provided for clubs with the templates that they had produced (field notes, 19.11.13 and 02.07.14). Classic top-down theory suggests that if sufficient resources are made available, and are available throughout the implementation process (to avoid bottlenecks), then there is an increased likelihood of successful implementation. Unfortunately, not all clubs, such as STSC, were supportive. STSC members suggested, during interviews, that they had felt pressured into adopting various templates. In their opinion, this was primarily to make the job of the RO (evidence checking) easier. For some tasks, such as budgeting, the club saw using the ASA template as problematic. The club had created systems over time to cope with their (lack of) capacity and resources. One member of STSC explained:

Clubs are being forced to adopt ASA templates. Now, clubs evolve and what I don't think the ASA fully appreciate is that most clubs are run by volunteers... So, systems that clubs have developed work for the clubs and why do we, as a small club, have to adopt a

⁹⁰ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/library/category/3445> (Accessed 10.08.15)

template designed by the ASA? I know it makes it easier for them... but that doesn't help the clubs. I think that's where the current drawback is with the current system. (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14)

However, another senior ASA official reiterated the fact that the templates are only for guidance and clubs (and officers) had a choice of whether or not they adopted the templates:

We came up with various templates that are guidance templates rather than have to be used. There's an awful lot of clubs that we get feedback saying "I've done this but I haven't put it on the ASA template". You know, it doesn't matter; we've put the ASA templates together to try and help the clubs, not to say "you know if you've done this already you now need to transfer all that information to our template", it isn't about that. (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14)

Here, there was clear ambiguity with STSC perceiving the templates are mandatory and the ASA suggesting that the templates are optional. Accordingly, the assumption that providing clearly defined goals or targets (elements) within *swim21* complemented with a plethora of templates and guidance materials would result in this process fitting in with Matland's (1995) *Administrative* implementation (low conflict and low ambiguity) would be incorrect for STSC. Currently, it would fit with *Experimental* implementation (low conflict and high ambiguity). In contrast, TSC fully embraced the use of ASA templates and were in fact complimentary towards the ASA for providing such comprehensive and detailed guidance. Clearly, there is no 'one size fits all' implementation approach the ASA can adopt to satisfy affiliated clubs working towards *swim21*.

7.5.7 Lack of staff continuity

Important factors that impact implementation of *swim21*, particularly with a small club, such as, STSC are the continuity of support from CDOs and RCCs/RCDOs, their background knowledge of the sport, and the knowledge of the club within its local environment. STSC club have encountered numerous ASA officer changes. To underline the issue, some clubs in the region would have received CDO support in the last 12 months, between 2014-2015, from five different individuals. This turnover can cause point of contact confusion within a club especially as a replacement officer often lacked local knowledge, as this example indicated, "we've had a bit of a change over because our Regional Club Coordinator has gone on maternity leave so I'm not sure who is covering. It might be an Aquatic Officer who has stepped in to cover but I wouldn't swear to it" (Interviewee SBC,

21.08.14). Changes like this resulted in STSC spending time “getting the replacement officer up to speed” (Interviewee SBC, 21.08.14) and as a consequence, slowed down implementation of *swim21*. This lack of continuity is an implementation barrier that Hogwood and Gunn (1984) highlight in their theoretical model. They proposed that dependency relationships should be minimal because multiple agencies greatly reduce the chance of perfect implementation.

The ASA did appreciate that staff movement could be unsettling for clubs and has caused continuity issues in the past, as one officer noted, “most staff changes are due to maternity leave. I think we’d be silly not to think that the staff turnover hasn’t affected some clubs attempting to achieve [implement] *swim21*” (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15). During another interview with a different ASA officer (interestingly, in a position of maternity cover) she suggested that when first introducing herself to club members some joked, “Oh, here’s another new face!” and although suggested in jest, she recognised their frustration (Interviewee SF, 11.07.15). Following these experiences, this particular officer has suggested to the Clubs Team that a way to improve the consistency of support and the continuity of ASA club officer support for clubs is to develop and introduce a hand over protocol.

The ASA did not directly involve CSP officers in offering guidance to clubs regarding the implementation process for *swim21*. The officials at the ASA suggested they are far more familiar with the requirements, particularly in relation to the continued minor adjustments, than any CSP officers. The ASA officers identified the importance of the Clubs Team meetings and the weekly email team updates (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14). The CSP officers may help with implementation indirectly; in the past they have helped to organise a safeguarding or *Time to Listen* course (requirements of *swim21*) but the CSP officers are never involved in the process itself. One ASA official commented, “I wouldn’t want clubs to go to them [CSPs] about *swim21* because I don’t think they’d have enough in-depth knowledge to offer the correct level of support” (Interviewee SF, 10.07.15). This approach is in direct contrast to the *Clubmark* guidance offered by EB. As highlighted in the boxing case study chapter EB officials actively encouraged clubs within their regions to make contact with their local CSP officer. EB officials felt that the CSPs had improved access to local funding opportunities for clubs.

In addition to occasionally assisting with the organisation of safeguarding courses, CSP officers offer independent representation on selected Regional Panels, as a chair, for

example. An independent actor, not an ASA official, always chairs a Panel meeting. One senior ASA official explained the benefit of involving CSP officers this way:

I think the link to the county sports partnership is quite a good one actually because what that means is, they can talk to us about experiences across other facets of *Clubmark* and what other NGB's are doing. (Interviewee SB, 02.07.14)

Here, the ASA continue to restrict the CSP's direct involvement with offering guidance and support to clubs but use them in a way where they can develop the organisation's knowledge by learning how other sports implement *Clubmark*.

Overall, it is clear that the ASA's implementation strategy has not been fixed but regularly and constantly revised due to: 1) imprecision of objectives (e.g. initially not covering all ASA disciplines); 2) the need and desire to reduce management costs; and 3) to satisfy and manage club expectations and capacity.

7.6 Safeguarding

As emphasised in Chapter 5 the 'Hickson case' sent shockwaves through sport and, in particular, the sport of swimming. The conviction of a former swimming coach for various sexual offences rapidly placed child abuse firmly on the policy agenda. The CPSU, formed in 2001, is a partnership between SE, NGBs, CSPs and other organisations, which aimed to help children stay safe in sport. The CPSU support the development and implementation of VSCs, responses, policies and procedures, systems and structures for safeguarding⁹¹. NGBs work with SE and the CPSU to develop safeguarding policies for their sport.

7.6.1 Wavepower

Wavepower 2012/15 is the ASA's current Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document, which is based on the five criteria outlined in the Chapter 5 that replaced all previous ASA safeguarding policies. The ASA stated that 'all ASA affiliated clubs should adopt and implement Wavepower 2012/15.'⁹² The ASA Legal Team drafted Wavepower 2012/15 to ensure that the generic criteria above were developed and tailored specifically to the aquatic disciplines. Within the Legal Team there were two safeguarding

⁹¹ <https://thecpsu.org.uk/about-us/> (Accessed 12.09.15)

⁹² <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/safeguarding-children/> (Accessed 15.05.14)

representatives, one who works internally, directly employed by the ASA and the other employed as a consultant.

Given the historic scandals within swimming it was to be expected that implementing this particular policy would be met with the least resistance by club members. The ASA are all too familiar with the potential issues that could occur in context of swimming, as this officer explained, "If we take it in very simplistic terms with the likes of us and gymnastics you're doing your sport in not particularly much clothing; you have to change to swim and any of the other aquatic disciplines whereas other sports you might arrive and leave in your kit. So, we do have a lot more to think about in making sure that young people and vulnerable adults are protected within sport" (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13). Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams model provides a useful framework for analysing the issue of safeguarding. There is a clear problem that must be addressed: the environment in which the club members train and compete must be safe and effective given the history of abuse in the sport. Therefore, the Wavepower document is the ASA's policy offered in response to the context of the problem stream.

The theme of Wavepower 2012/15 (ASA, 2012b) is to safeguard children and young people in line with current legislation and guidance. The responsibility to safeguard children in clubs and related activities is placed with all those involved in the sport and is not the sole responsibility of any one person at club, county or national level. The ASA recommend on their website that:

Safeguarding children should become an integral part of all club activities and create a culture that provides a safe, happy and fun environment in which children can learn to swim and develop to a level appropriate for their ability.⁹³

Information in the Wavepower introduction states that the reason for such a comprehensive document is to 'enable everyone in swimming to play their part in safeguarding children' (Wavepower, Section 1, p. 3). From the outset, this is a clear statement where the ASA are reinforcing the recommendation of sharing the responsibility between all club members, not just assume it is the sole responsibility of the welfare officer.

The principle of Wavepower 2012/15 is to provide awareness of both mandatory requirements and good practice guidance to enable everyone involved in swimming to

⁹³ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/safeguarding-children/> (Accessed 15.05.14)

play their part in safeguarding children. The policy documentation endeavored to deliver practical guidance for those who are directly involved in working with children and is divided into sub-sections tailored to different groups:

- Section 1 Introduction to Wavepower 2012/15
- Section 2 Toolbox for clubs
- Section 3 Responsibility for child safeguarding in the ASA
- Section 4 Information and guidance for coaches, teachers and poolside helpers
- Section 5 Information and guidance for young people
- Section 6 Information and guidance for parents

Wavepower provided detailed information within the policy document. It was subdivided with the aim of making it a concise and user-friendly document. Information included: potential scenarios (with practical advice on actions to take), mandatory requirements, best practice guidance, and the confidential *Swimline* telephone number to discuss any concerns.

The importance the ASA placed on this policy was very clear. For example, the *Foreword* to Wavepower 2012/15 provided reinforcement to its members by presenting statements from the, then, CEO of the ASA alongside the Director of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) who expressed how content the NSPCC, and the CPSU, were to endorse the updated version of Wavepower (ASA, 2012b). In addition to working with the CPSU the ASA list other organisations that helped to develop the latest policy. Whether it was through direct relationships or utilising material produced by the other organisations; the substantial list again reiterates the importance of this policy for the ASA. Organisations included: ASA Youth Forum; members of British Swimming World Class Operations; England and Wales Cricket Board; the Sport and Recreation Alliance; British Swimming Coaches Association; Kidscape; and additional feedback from welfare officers, coaching staff, parents, swimmers, volunteers and individuals who work with children and young people in affiliated clubs who shared their ideas on the content of Wavepower 2012/15.

Clubs working towards *swim21 club Essential* accreditation must satisfy certain safeguarding criteria (see Figure 7.4), which include:

- A signed statement, by the club welfare officer, of compliance to ASA Wavepower policies.
- A signed statement from the welfare officer to confirm all relevant personnel hold a valid DBS certificate.

- Minimum of four current (within the last 3 years) safeguarding certificates from ASA approved course list.
- Certificate of attendance for the club welfare officer from a NSPCC *Time to Listen* training course.

Compliance with Wavepower policies required completion of the signed statements and attendance at safeguarding and *Time to Listen* courses. The safeguarding course ensures the attendee understood and followed good coaching practices. The preferred recommended training was the ASA/Sports Coach UK Safeguarding and Protecting Children Workshop, which used swimming-specific examples and referred to the Wavepower policy document. It was a requirement that the course attendance certificate was renewed every three years. This course attendance renewal requirement had caused STSC implementation difficulties. Fortunately, for members of STSC, in January 2015 Sports Coach UK announced a new eLearning approach where individuals could renew their safeguarding training by updating their understanding of safeguarding at a time that suited them. This new available option meant that the ASA had to update the associated safeguarding documentation (on the portal and on the ASA website) to reflect this change.

The ASA also collaborated with the NSPCC's CPSU to become an accredited course provider to deliver the *Time to Listen* module. The *Time to Listen* is designed to enable attendees to acquire core knowledge and develop essential skills to achieve their role and responsibilities; adopt a child-focused approach to safeguarding; and share and learn good practices from other actors in the same club roles. With the ASA becoming a course provider the NGB should be able to offer more *Time to Listen* courses for its clubs' members, at more suitable locations and at more suitable times. In addition, an ASA official explained a further benefit of the ASA becoming a provider would be that "the course material will use swimming-specific examples, rather than the generic sport examples the CPSU use." (Interviewee SC, 12.02.15)

Empirical evidence indicated that the ASA implementation strategy for Wavepower offered no flexibility; both clubs implemented policy requirements as the ASA intended. Although there is no suggestion from the case study data analysed (from either the ASA or club perspectives), that elements of the Wavepower policy had not been implemented as intended, there were aspects of implementation that could be open to interpretation. This excerpt from an ASA official's interview demonstrates the scope for interpretation:

On the portal you'll see the element, which, will have a statement next to it, and that statement will show you what evidence we're looking for. So, signed declarations for Wavepower could be one of the elements. Essentially we are looking for an upload of dated signed signatures to say that everyone has read that information. (Interviewee SB, 15.09.15)

The only checking procedure that the ASA have is to examine the uploaded signatures against the element to say that the relevant volunteers have read and understood all of the Wavepower policy documentation; there is no further check to ensure an individual has not just claimed that they have read the policy. The ASA are aware of this but make it clear to the clubs that the responsibility falls within a clubs' duty:

One of the criteria is that everyone should have signed saying that they have read that policy and they are fully aware that Wavepower exists and they are fully aware of all the detail that is in that. I guess there is a risk that they could potentially sign it having not read it but ultimately, that's not going to stand up in court, because if you put your name to a signature to say that you are well aware of what Wavepower says then you should make damn sure you've read it. (Interviewee SB, 15.09.15)

In another example of a situation open to interpretation, the ASA officials expected club members to adopt a common-sense approach; swimming occurs in an acoustically driven environment whereby the coach often shouts or projects their voice so clubs must have the correct policies and procedures in place if ever the situation arises where the shouting is interpreted as bullying. A final example was during a swimming competition, which was observed at STSC. The programme of events for the competition contained a safeguarding message. It said that 'anyone wishing to use photographic equipment, including mobile phones, must report their details at the desk by the door'. In return you would receive a wristband. The instruction was explicit (field notes). However, during the competition there were many individuals taking photos and videos (with cameras and smartphones) who were not wearing wristbands. This could be perceived as implementation failure. It does raise the question of whether it is actually possible to control the taking of photographs or videos: the short answer is probably not – the local context is substantially beyond the control and resources of 'street-level bureaucrats'.

Bottom-up theorists focus attention on service deliverers, target groups and the day-to-day context within which they operate, maintaining that policy is made at the local level, and as a consequence policy-makers are unable to control the process. Having highlighted the potential opportunity for interpretation of policy at the local level, data from the

swimming clubs indicated that both had a clear understanding of, and agreement on, Wavepower objectives and their responsibilities. Each club had clear policies and procedures written into their respective constitutions and both clubs had welfare officer roles assigned. In fact, STC had two welfare officers: one female and one male.

It was apparent that the historic safeguarding issues play a part in the fact that the two swimming clubs follow ASA safeguarding policy implementation extremely closely. Members from both clubs mentioned the chequered past of safeguarding within the sport. With clubs being aware of this history, the high degree of conformity in implementation is in part due to an awareness that if safeguarding procedures fail the environment would become hostile and the club would face serious consequences.

Interview data confirmed that despite the detailed specification of policy the ASA do in fact allow a degree of flexibility in relation to the strategy for implementation. One of the requirements (element 18) in the 'Workforce' section of *swim21 club Essential* states that only safeguarding certificates from the ASA approved course list are acceptable for individuals to submit as evidence. There is also a time constraint, which requires the certificates to be no more than three years old. However, there have been instances where the ASA have not been rigid in relation to this element of policy and discretion has been exercised. As one ASA official explained, "individuals who have undertaken safeguarding training as part of their professional careers, we can look at their training and decide, via the assistance of the ASA Legal Team, if their training is acceptable evidence for *swim21*" (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15). This flexible approach is a recent process modification and it is distinctly possible that the change was introduced as a result of club feedback. One of the club members from TSC bemoaned the old rigid system:

Every third year we have to go and do the child protection course again, the same one, it doesn't change...Because I'm a level 3, going on level 4, child protection trained in my job as a GP [General Practitioner] this is purely a tick box exercise for the ASA and a complete and utter waste of my time but I have to do it. (Interviewee SAA, 09.02.14)

Adopting the professional career safeguarding evidence check was a pragmatic response by the ASA to local constraints. Both swimming clubs in this study found it a challenge (mainly due to volunteer time constraints) to get individuals to attend safeguarding courses. Offering some flexibility overseen by the ASA Legal Team, overcomes this potential implementation barrier.

The ASA have had to produce 'Wavepower 2012/15 Additional Useful documents' as a response to environmental and contextual changes, which were available on the portal and the on the ASA website⁹⁴. Documentation included updates about social media usage that provide a step-by-step guide for parents on using Twitter – a social media platform. The ASA website stated that the document should be read in conjunction with the Wavepower guidance on using social networks. Discussing the additional documentation, one ASA official suggested, "we would be asking for trouble if we didn't have anything written around social media, which is huge, in terms of Facebook groups and how you communicate with young people. Now that they've got a smartphone at their disposal they can tweet you, they can message you on Facebook so you have to know how to communicate responsibly" (Interviewee SA, 19.11.13). On examination it was noted that both STSC and TSC had rules and procedures for the use of social media within their respective constitutions and protocols, for parents and children, on their club websites.

In another example, the ASA were in the process of planning an update to the 'Workforce' (safeguarding) section of *swim21 club Essential*. Masters' clubs (clubs where members are aged 18+) did not have the need to appoint a child welfare officer as it was not relevant and, occasionally, masters' clubs did not even have a poolside coach. As a consequence, the ASA official explained that to date there had been minimal interest in *swim21* from masters' clubs. Therefore, the ASA wanted to ensure that, in the future, the masters' aquatic discipline was also operating in a safe, effective environment due to the fact adults too need to be safeguarded (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15).

Overall, top-down implementation was seen to be effective for the safeguarding policy in swimming. Similarly to *swim21*, the safeguarding policy (Wavepower) was reviewed and updated on a regular basis. As discussed in the chapter, where compliance was not achieved within the given timescales and where it was not the fault of the clubs (specific safeguarding courses were not available, for example) the ASA introduced a grace period to resolve that particular implementation barrier. Although some clubs have shown dissatisfaction with the requirement to complete all safeguarding criteria, compliance with ASA policy is high as there is a general acknowledgement that no one would want to join a local club that could not provide a safe environment for its members.

⁹⁴ <http://www.swimming.org/asa/clubs-and-members/safeguarding-children/> (Accessed 10.05.15)

7.7 Increasing membership and/or participation

The coalition government's primary policy designed to increase sport participation in the UK was called *Creating a Sporting Habit for Life* (DCMS, 2012), which targeted the 14-25 age group. On 27th February 2013 the government published a new policy targeting increasing participation simply titled *Getting more people playing sport* (DCMS & DfE, 2013), which was a policy implemented through the DCMS and the Department for Education. The government argued that sport keeps people healthy, it is beneficial to communities and that playing sport at school or in local clubs is where elite athletes begin their career and it is these factors that are seen to improve the nation's sporting reputation, and contribute to economic growth (DCMS & DfE, 2013).

SE agrees participation targets with the ASA, which are then included in the ASA's WSP. However, working towards these targets was the primary responsibility of the Get People Swimming (GPS) department, which falls outside the focus of this study (see Figure 7.6). Within the GPS structure, it was the principal objective of the Divisional Business Managers and AOs (and within the remit of the Health and Wellbeing Team) to grow participation. Although attempts to increase participation run through the whole of the ASA, the Clubs Team were not directly specified any participation targets or club membership targets by SE; swimming clubs are not used as a means for boosting participation in the sport. One ASA official explained their involvement in relation to the organisation attempting to develop participation:

Every year we [a CDO] have to meet with our CSP Officer and local AO to agree an action plan with set deadlines. Each CSP has some NGB priority targets and they have to report back how they are supporting that sport. We plan and agree with them A) how they will support clubs and B) how they will aim to increase participation. The AO will lead on the participation side and we will work on the clubs side with things like getting them to attend network meetings, promoting and planning courses, such as, safeguarding. (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15)

Increasing participation is important for the ASA; the SE funding that the sport received was contingent on achieving the WSP targets. These targets are measured against data captured in the APS publications. Historically, this was not the case but with the introduction of conditions attached to funding it has formalised the relationship between SP and the ASA (and the other 45 NGBs).

Table 7.1 Once a week swimming participation (1x30 minutes) aged 16+

APS publication	Number of swimming participants
APS1 (Oct 2005-Oct 2006)	3,273,800
APS2 (Oct 2007-Oct 2008)	3,244,300
APS3 (Oct 2008-Oct 2009)	3,162,400
APS4 (Oct 2009-Oct 2010)	3,156,300
APS5 (Oct 2010 - Oct 2011)	2,809,300
APS6 (Oct 2011 - Oct 2012)	2,933,100
APS7 (Oct 2012 - Oct 2013)	2,934,200
APS8 (Oct 2013 - Oct 2014)	2,689,200
APS8 Q3 - APS9 Q2 (Apr 2014 - Mar 2015)	2,545,000
APS9 (Oct 2014 - Sep 2015)	2,505,700

Source: Adapted from information on the SE website⁹⁵

Figures in Table 7.1 paint a sorry picture for swimming. Ever since the data was first captured by APS1 there has been a consistent steady decline in participation. Furthermore, as indicated in Chapter 5 (Table 5.2), the most recent swimming participation figure from APS9 is approximately half a million below the 2,958,100 *Year 4* (2016/2017) participation target⁹⁶ stated in swimming's 2013-2017 WSP, so the ASA have a substantial task in attempting to reduce the deficit.

In fact, following the release of the APS8 statistics, it caused in the Sports Minister, Tracey Crouch, to promise delivery of a new strategy for sport "as a matter of urgency" following the decline in participation across all sports, with swimming the most affected⁹⁷. At the time ASA chief executive, Adam Parker, told BBC Radio 5 live, "we have to understand what is turning the consumer off and why it's turning that person off. Access to pools certainly is a factor." He went on to explain that, "there has been a drop-off in the number of pools we've got in this country. We also have an old stock of pools. Almost 45 per cent of our pools were built before the 1980s so there is an aging stock of pools."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ <https://www.sportengland.org/research/who-plays-sport/by-sport/> (Accessed 14.06.16)

⁹⁶ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/3743/agreed-ngb-wsp-targets-1.pdf> (Accessed 03.07.15)

⁹⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/swimming/33091363> (Accessed 14.06.16)

⁹⁸ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/swimming/33091363> (Accessed 14.06.16)

All of the ASA officials interviewed in this study were fully aware of the participation issue but their primary focus was to support aquatic clubs. Although there are currently no club membership targets, one of the ASA officials explained that a new Clubs Operational Plan was in the process of being written and the likelihood was that there would be club membership targets introduced for the Clubs Team (Interviewee SD, 14.04.15).

During data analysis it was noted that at the top of the *swim21 club Essential* matrix documentation it stated that '*swim21 club Essential* will support your club to grow membership' (see Appendix F) and a primary outcome of *swim21 Club Network* status is to 'retain and increase ASA club members.' This growth statement was raised during the interview process. However, the interview responses were that the Clubs Team did not have any data available to confirm whether or not *swim21*-accredited clubs saw an increase in their membership figures. In this case study, it was the ASA (through the CDOs and ROs), rather than the clubs, that took the lead with regard to efforts to increase membership. If a club was at capacity and did not want to expand, then the ASA respected that desire. This approach highlighted another example of the sensitive top-down management demonstrated by the ASA, and the important role of the VSC members (street-level bureaucrats) in the decision making process during implementation.

7.8 Club Matters

As highlighted in the SE chapter *Club Matters* has been introduced by SE, which merged *Clubmark* into the new initiative. When collecting interview data from the ASA officials *Club Matters* was in the early stages of the official role out. The ASA officials were aware of SE's new club development tool and had been advised to encourage clubs to use the resource but were not aware of any specific *Club Matters* targets. Nevertheless, the ASA officials understood the benefit of informing club members of the information they have the opportunity to access, as this ASA official explained:

I get so many queries about tax, specifically PAYE (pay as you earn). But I don't have the specialist knowledge so, for me, *Club Matters* is somewhere I signpost them to so they can organise a workshop and get the experts to help them with their queries. (Interviewee SF, 11.07.15)

With the introduction of *Club Matters* the ASA were adopting a flexible approach; there are many (free) resources available for clubs, which have been prepared for by SE and other area-specific experts. This meant that for certain generic enquiries received from clubs,

the ASA had a wealth of additional resources that they have not had to set aside time to prepare themselves. The experts that the ASA official mentioned above are PwC. A club member has the ability to request a workshop (or a one-to-one meeting) with a PwC employee from various departments (in this case the tax department) who will arrange a consultation to offer free advice, guidance and support.

7.9 Managing implementation

Drawing on Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict model of policy implementation it is clear that, over time, the success of *swim21* implementation has varied. Figure 7.7 depicts an overview from the point that *swim21* (including safeguarding and membership/participation) was first introduced by the ASA, in 2002, to the end of 2015. The three policy strands will now be discussed in greater detail.

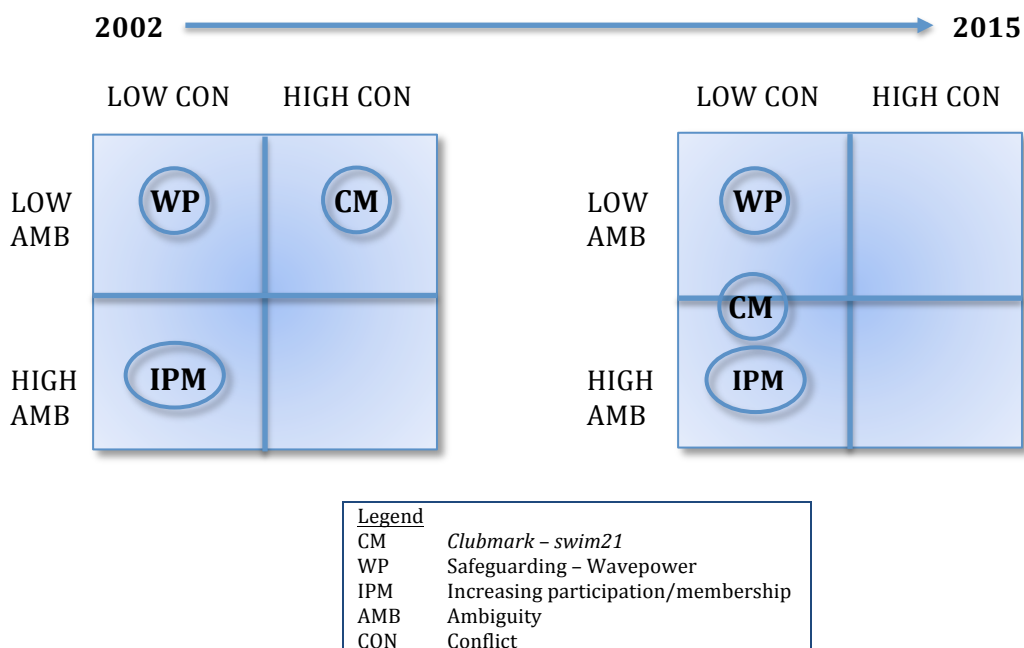


Figure 7.7 Implementation ambiguity and conflict levels over time for swimming

7.9.1 Safeguarding

Since 2002 implementation of this policy (Wavepower and the safeguarding course requirements for *swim21*) followed the ideal most closely, and it has continued to follow the ideal into 2015. Data suggested that the Wavepower policy was initially located in the *administrative implementation* paradigm, and has not moved from its position over time. Policies within this paradigm are low in conflict and low in ambiguity.

In the case of safeguarding in swimming, with the policy located in the *administrative* implementation quadrant, normative mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961; Matland, 1995) brought about compliance; both swimming clubs and the ASA treated safeguarding compliance as a priority. This is primarily due to the historical sexual abuse cases that plagued the sport during the 1990s, and the fact that (adolescent) club members' train and compete wearing minimal clothing. The ASA want to distance themselves from the abuse cases, keeping it a historical issue, not to be repeated. Also, should a club fail to comply, the potential – and likely – hostile environment it would produce, and potential collapse of the VSC, was a large enough deterrent to ensure a club was clearly compliant with ASA safeguarding policies and procedures.

Both STSC and TSC had no issue in following the Wavepower guidance produced by the ASA. Every individual who came into contact with children (or, even had the potential to do so) around poolside or at competitions had to have a current DBS check certificate, and the role of the welfare officer was taken seriously in both clubs. Even though STSC is a smaller (rural) club, and have a number of vacant committee positions, they had two welfare officers: one male and one female to cover any potential situations that may arise. Even with any Wavepower updates, such as, new social media guidance, there were no issues with policy compliance. In fact, TSC already had a social media policy written into the constitution prior to publication of the ASA's additional information document.

7.9.2 *swim21*

When this policy (*swim21*) was first introduced in 2002 the framework was located in the *Political implementation* paradigm on the account that compliance was not automatically forthcoming. There were clearly defined goals set out by the ASA (low policy ambiguity) yet club members perceived *swim21* as additional bureaucratic paperwork from the NGB and failed to comprehend the potential benefits it could bring to the clubs. Both clubs in this case study initially used the framework, with scepticism, as a 'box ticking' exercise.

Nonetheless, over time TSC and STSC have increased acceptance of the process, hence ASA goals (*swim21* criteria) are becoming less incompatible with the priorities of clubs.

Implementation of *swim21* has moved around Matland's (1995) implementation paradigms since the 2002 introduction. For example, when new iterations of the *swim21* framework were introduced, the changes were met with resistance (particularly the case when there was no transition period offered, or when managerial leadership (prior to the inauguration of the Clubs Team) of *swim21* was lacking), which meant that for a period *swim21* slipped into the *symbolic* implementation quadrant (high conflict, high ambiguity); many swimming clubs dropped out of the *swim21* process due to the uncertainty of *swim21* requirements for clubs that were part way through the previous version accreditation process, and the inherent conflict that occurred surrounding the changes to the process.

As of December 2015 *swim21* was located between the *Administrative* implementation and *Experimental* implementation typologies. Club members have begun to gain a greater understanding of the requirements for *swim21* and appreciate the potential benefits of achieving the accreditation standard. However, in efforts to gain increased acceptance of *swim21* from some clubs, the ASA utilised remunerative mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961) by offering incentives, such as course discounts and cash bonuses on completion of successful implementation, to make compliance more appealing. As a consequence, not all members from VSCs (including some from this study) fully understood the intended benefits and had a tendency to focus on the tangible benefits of achieving *swim21*, such as the course discounts or the cash bonuses. Having said that, the longer that both clubs (in this case study) were involved with *swim21*, data suggested that they steadily increased efforts to ensure (the best they could) that sufficient resources were available and that they had the capability to enact the requirements of the framework; although, contextual conditions continued to impact the some outcomes, as highlighted with examples from STSC, such as, a lack of volunteer capacity to collate certain evidence and volunteers having the time (and, in turn, the capacity to arrange poolside coaching cover) to attend the required courses.

7.9.3 Membership and participation

In 2002 increasing membership was located in the *experimental implementation* paradigm as outcomes depend on the level of club volunteer involvement and contextual conditions

dominated the process. Some clubs wanted to expand the club's membership; others lack the resources and capacity (pool space, volunteers) to do so. A CDO discussed the desire of each club and offers support accordingly. Although an original outcome of achieving *swim21* stated on ASA documentation was that club membership would increase, the Clubs Team did not have any targets for increasing membership. As highlighted earlier, increasing participation in the sport of swimming fell outside the remit of the Clubs Team; it was the responsibility of AO's and the Health and Wellbeing Team to drive up participation. Club membership does not count towards the participation data captured by the APS, which is SE's measure for the ASA. Therefore, this policy strand remained in *experimental implementation* due to the high ambiguity (or rather, a lack of clear policy goals) and the range of contextual conditions that affect clubs across the country. No compliance mechanisms were identified in the data. Both STSC and TSC were happy with their respective membership bases and were not looking to expand. In fact, allocating suitable volume of training time to the range of swimming abilities within STSC's current membership, with the clubs' swimming pool allocation at the LA facility was an ongoing struggle.

7.10 Conclusion

This case study has analysed the implementation of *Clubmark* and highlighted three very different issues evident with the implementation of *Clubmark* and the associated policies.

7.10.1 *Clubmark*

swim21 was a complex, multi-faceted framework (policy) of moderate to high importance to both swimming clubs and the ASA. For *swim21* the consequences of complexity resulted in repeated changes to action and process (Barrett & Fudge, 1981; Barrett, 2004), which were driven, in part, by resistance (and lack of capacity) at club level. However, this case study highlights an example where there has been the combination of a sensitive top-down management approach in implementation, coupled with bottom-up adaptation. The empirical evidence certainly demonstrated the dissatisfaction from club members (of the *swim21* accreditation process), which was fed back to the ASA through various channels. The sheer number of iterations of *swim21*, since the introduction in 2002 clearly validates that the ASA have not been rigid in the implementation strategy and it is important to note that many of the changes were initiated by negative club feedback. A central focus for the ASA, over the past seven years, has been to streamline the number of *swim21* elements to

find a mutually acceptable version of *swim21*, but to stay within the limits of *Clubmark* set out by SE. Barrett and Fudge (1981) described the implementation process as the 'policy-action relationship' where the negotiative perspective suggests that the focus should be directed toward relationships and interactions of actors who are part of the process. These individuals are seen as key factors, which can shape policy results and implementation outcomes. It is clear that in this case study that the *swim21* policy process has not been linear and many of the decisions have not solely been determined centrally; club members' feedback and contention has heavily influenced and affect *swim21* policy.

Additionally, the geographical location and local contextual conditions were seen to affect the implementation of *swim21* with the clubs from this case study. As illustrated throughout this chapter STSC experienced a greater number of difficulties in achieving certain *swim21* criteria compared with TSC, which were primarily issues with a lack of capacity. These scenarios were often recognised by the ASA (although, not always in good time) and processes were introduced in an effort to minimise club difficulties. This again, a demonstration of the sensitive top-down management approach adopted. An example of such a scenario is provided in the following Wavepower section.

7.10.2 Wavepower

Wavepower was a narrowly focused policy and seen to be very important to both of the swimming clubs and the ASA. Although safeguarding was of great importance for VSCs and the NGB there was still a need for flexibility in implementation due to local constraints. Examples of this flexibility offered by the ASA include the grace period offered to welfare officers for course attendance and consideration of professional qualifications with regard to the DBS checking process.

7.10.3 Membership and participation

Increasing membership and participation was narrowly focused but of low importance to both swimming clubs and of only moderate importance to the Clubs Team within the ASA. The clubs in this case study had membership bases that they could just about manage. For example, STSC could not cope with an increase in membership (at capacity with the number of volunteers (poolside helpers, for example) and the allocation of pool time for training) so had no interest in increasing participation through their membership. The empirical evidence indicated that although the overarching target across the ASA was to

increase swimming participation, club membership did not contribute towards this target. Consequently, there was little policy development by the ASA in this area. Practical constraints on implementation and the disconnect between membership and participation objectives meant the only real interest in increasing membership came from developing school-club links, which still did not have an impact on APS figures.

7.10.4 Role of the ASA

Analysis demonstrated that the ASA began to learn from the implementation process of each *swim21* revision, and the organisation continued to develop its knowledge. With the introduction of every new version (of *swim21*) the ASA attempted to improve the success rate of its implementation but continued to face a number of difficulties.

The ASA attempted on many occasions to take a strong line on implementation of *swim21*, only to be forced into a rapid review; SE's backing of *Clubmark* carried little weight with clubs. Over time the ASA became more conscious of the need to adapt to differing club circumstances (particularly around the issue of capacity). As an example, grace periods (discussed earlier in the chapter) were introduced. Although the ASA attempted to control clubs through the accreditation by prescribing the process and producing an abundance of comprehensive guidance templates the organisation had to negotiate with clubs to find mutually accepted versions of *swim21*, which often required a sensitive top-down management approach. Conversely, the backing of the CPSU, NSPCC and SE of Wavepower did add weight to the policy and negotiation was not required. Therefore, this evidence suggests that external authorities can be supportive for top-down policy implementation. The negotiation to gradually increase clubs' acceptance fits with the network approach to policy where 'network management' strategies (*process management* and *network constitution*) focus on mediating and coordinating inter-organisational policymaking. Klijn and Koppenjan (2000) suggested that *process management* aims to direct strategies in attempts to unite the divergent opinions of individuals and solve the problem that various organisations (in having autonomously developed their own strategies) are not automatically in agreement with one another. *Network constitution* strategies often focus on changing the views of individuals, or introducing new actors into the network in an effort to create new perceptions. The introduction can even alter given positions of power and regularities in interaction (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). Therefore, the introduction of CDOs (and offering the annual Club Conferences) can be viewed as a *process management* strategy adopted by the ASA in an attempt to unite club members' (often misinformed and

negative) perceptions of *swim21* with those of the ASA's suggested benefits of the framework, and *network constitution* strategies due to the introduction of new actors' involvement in the implementation of *swim21*.

The face-to-face interaction of CDOs (and ROs) with club members is also a conscious attempt by the ASA to alter the perceived power relations of 'us versus them' and the 'ivory tower' narratives. The face-to-face interactions (with CDOs and other ASA officers at the conferences) provide an opportunity for club members to feedback their views directly to the policy makers, which can be understood as an effort to minimise the implementation distance between the ASA and the point of delivery. Moreover, discussions between the ASA and club members can be used to provide clear communication channels to ensure there is a full understanding and agreement of the policy goals (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).

7.10.5 Role of swimming clubs

Ever since the introduction of *swim21* there has been a clear pattern of resistance and lack of acceptance with the framework by clubs. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) stated that with major departures from previous policies and practices there is a high probability of suspicion or resistance, which is what the data in this case study have demonstrated. With the implementation of almost every new version of *swim21* there has been resistance from clubs and often left ASA officials "fire fighting" with club members (Interviewee SBD, 16.01.11). Nevertheless, not only has the ASA's knowledge and sensitivity developed over time – club knowledge of *swim21* has improved. The data indicated that there has been a slow process of cultural acceptance of the value of *swim21* with swimming clubs across the country (including TSC and STSC). Both clubs in this case study have moved away from using *swim21* as a 'box ticking' exercise to using the framework as a developmental tool. The success of implementation is heavily dependent on the individuals within a club and the (volunteer) resources available. Capacity issues continued to impede the successful implementation for some clubs. Although, overall, there is now a greater acceptance of the *swim21* process, inadequate number of volunteers was the limiting factor in some clubs.

Chapter 8 Case Study Three: Rugby Football Union

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings from the Rugby Football Union (RFU) case study, which is centred on three policies: Sport England's *Clubmark* framework, safeguarding policy and increasing membership and participation initiatives.

8.2 Rugby Football Union

In January 1871, 32 people representing 21 clubs attended a meeting in London, chaired by EC Holmes who was the captain of Richmond club. Within two hours of this meeting the RFU was formed. Shortly after the RFU was established, other countries formed their own unions: Scotland in 1873; Ireland in 1879; and Wales in 1880. The RFU remained the ultimate authority of the sport until establishment of the International Rugby Board (IRB) in 1886, which the RFU joined in 1890⁹⁹. In Paris, on 25th August 1995, the International Rugby Board (IRB) declared that rugby union football was to be an 'open' game, which meant players could receive remuneration to play (O'Brien & Slack, 2003). The professionalisation of rugby union allowed the RFU to invest in English rugby clubs, the English national team and schools rugby¹⁰⁰.

The RFU is the national governing body for grassroots and elite rugby in England. The RFU membership consists of 2,000 autonomous rugby clubs that are grouped within 35 Constituent Bodies (CBs). The CBs consist of: individual and combined counties; the three armed forces; Oxford and Cambridge Universities; England Schools Rugby Football Union; and England Students. The RFU provides 50 Rugby Development Officers (RDOs), six Area Managers and 120 Community Rugby Coaches (CRCs) who offer circa 30,000 coaching sessions a year for young people. The RFU employs approximately 500 paid staff and help to train and support more than 60,000 volunteers¹⁰¹. To put the size of the RFU organisation into context EB and the ASA had nine CSOs and CDOs respectively, which were the equivalent of the 50 RDO roles. For the sports of swimming and boxing one club support/development covered one of the nine SE regions; rugby had at least one RDO per

⁹⁹ <http://www.englandrugby.com/about-the-rfu/history-of-the-rfu/> (Accessed 23.08.16)

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.englandrugby.com/about-the-rfu/history-of-the-rfu/> (Accessed 23.08.16)

¹⁰¹ <http://www.englandrugby.com/about-the-rfu/> (Accessed 23.08.16)

county¹⁰². The organisational structure of the RFU, relevant to this research, is shown in Figure 8.1.

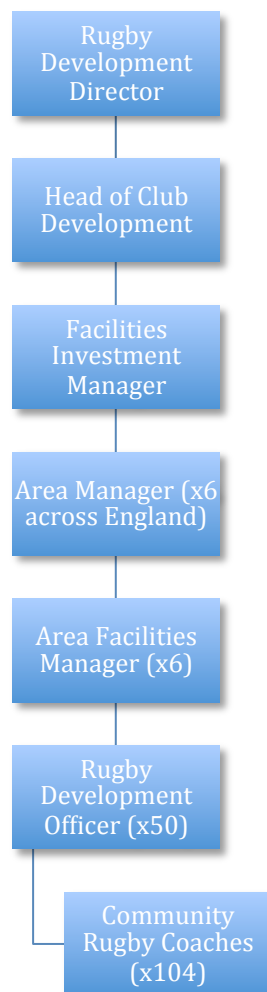


Figure 8.1 Organisational structure of the RFU relevant to this research

8.3 Community Rugby Clubs

Two community rugby union clubs located in the East Midland region of England were selected for this rugby case study. As with the swimming and boxing case studies, it was not the intention to provide rugby club examples that are generalisable and representative across the whole of England; it was to provide a portrayal of rural community clubs that are not necessarily untypical but have been selected due to their geographical location and available resources, which could potentially result in the policy implementation process as a challenging activity.

¹⁰² In December 2015 some counties had two or three RDOs, each supported by two CRCs.

8.3.1 Town Rugby Club

Town Rugby Club (TRC) is located on the outskirts of a major city in the East Midland region of England, which, according to the ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates of 2015 had a population of slightly less than 320,000. TRC was formed in 1931 and in 1984 the club moved from its original location to their present purpose built ground, where there is a large clubhouse and modern facilities. Two of the four full-sized pitches are floodlit and the club has an additional mini pitch/training area.

TRC is a member of the [the local] County Rugby Union and the East Midlands Rugby Union. TRC field three senior men's teams, a ladies team and have a large junior and mini's section. Local schools and colleges regularly use the ground for selection trials and it is used for referee training¹⁰³. TRC consists of 212 members and first achieved the RFU Active Sports *Seal of Approval (SoA)* in 2010.

8.3.2 Small Town Rugby Club

Small Town Rugby Club (STRC) is located in a rural village in the East Midland region of England. Small Town has an estimated population of 14,100 according to the local district council. STRC was founded on 26th October 1982 and in 1987 the clubhouse was opened. STRC has approximately 204 playing members and 80 social members (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15).

STRC is a member of the [the local] County Rugby Union and the East Midlands Rugby Union and have won promotion on four separate occasions; most recently in 2006/07. STRC regularly field four senior teams: the first fifteen; the ladies; the seconds (a development side); and, a veterans' team. The first ladies team was formed in 2004 and entered the wRFU (women's) league in 2006, which they went on to win. Mini and junior rugby was a major part of the club with sides from 6 to 17 years old. The junior section of the club competes in the [local counties] Challenge Shield Cup Competition each year.

In 2007 the club was awarded the RFU Active Sports *SoA*. STRC proudly stated on their website that the award demonstrated that the club has proven that children from the age of six upwards would be given a family friendly and safe environment, and receive coaching with facilities and equipment of the highest order¹⁰⁴. To develop the future of the

¹⁰³ Information taken from TRC's website. URL is available at examiner's request.

¹⁰⁴. Information taken from STRC's website. URL is available at examiner's request.

club STRC has initiated an integration programme that mixes junior and senior training in an attempt to enable the juniors to get to know and learn from the more experienced players in the club¹⁰⁵. The STRC website states that individuals do not have to be a member to play or use the club facilities and the club offers a wide variety of social events that include quiz nights, car boot sales, a beer festival and an annual barbeque event they call Sausagefest.

8.4 The RFU's *Clubmark*

The RFU introduced the Active Sports¹⁰⁶ *SoA* accreditation framework in 2002 as a method of examining, maintaining and improving the provision of rugby in the youth section of a rugby club. The accreditation aimed to recognise the effort and achievement of those clubs that would reach, maintain and improve on the required standard of a club committed to the Active Sports programme¹⁰⁷.

8.4.1 (Mini and youth) *Seal of Approval*

For rugby union clubs with mini and youth sections, the RFU introduced the Active Sports Mini and Youth *SoA* in 2002, which was based on SE's *Clubmark* accreditation framework. It was used as a method of examining, maintaining and improving the provision of rugby for young people. The framework aimed to reward the effort and achievement of the volunteers for those clubs that reached and maintained required standards of safety, coaching and development of junior players.

The RFU has a Community Game Board and a Professional Game Board. The Community Game Board has numerous sub-committees, which is where the tailoring of the generic SE *Clubmark* framework to the RFU's *SoA* took place (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14). The key principles of the *SoA* framework included:

- The *Seal of Approval* is used to satisfy the Active Sports Club Registration Criteria for those clubs involved in delivery of the Active Sports Rugby Union Programme
- The criteria for the Sport England 'Safe, Effective and Child Friendly Club' mark is integrated within the *Seal of Approval*. A successful application for the RFU *Seal of Approval* will achieve the Sport England 'Safe, Effective & Child Friendly Club'

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/VenueDetails.aspx?venuecode=24703> (Accessed 23.08.16)

¹⁰⁶ A SE initiative that attempted to foster children's involvement in sport.

¹⁰⁷ <http://ecrfu.wetink.co.uk/community-rugby/seal-of-approval> (Accessed 11.08.16)

- The Programme is based upon a three year Level I, Level II and Level III Award system in which a club will be assessed on its ability to provide a safe, effective and child friendly club environment
- Having completed the *Seal of Approval* Audit and Evidence File, a club will identify activities or areas that require development over the next 12 months. The club will then produce a development plan based upon these needs, whereupon successful accreditation will have been achieved
- By implementing the first year development plan and having the second year plan approved, a club will qualify for Level II status. The same process in year three will lead to Level III status
- The Award will be an indication of the quality of provision a club offers, and its commitment to the continued development of young rugby players. A club will receive certification to confirm accreditation, both from the Rugby Football Union and Sport England¹⁰⁸.

The RFU provided a 40-page ‘Mini & Youth *Seal of Approval* Guidance Booklet’ (Rugby Football Development Limited, 2008) that outlined a step-by-step guide of how to plan and achieve the accreditation. For example, the booklet stated that prior to embarking on the process, the ‘club is committed to the programme and that at least three members of your club are willing to be responsible for implementation.’ (p. 5). This was a clear message, from the outset, from the RFU that for the policy to be successfully implemented, the club members must take full responsibility to drive the accreditation process.

The SoA framework consisted of five main sections and 12 development strands (Rugby Football Development Limited, 2008), which were:

- 1. People**
 - 1) Players, 2) Coaches, 3) Referees, 4) Volunteers
- 2. Member services**
 - 5) Playing and training, 6) Social
- 3. Member welfare**
 - 7) Equity, medical and welfare
- 4. Community Links**
 - 8) Community links
- 5. Club Management**
 - 9) Finance, 10) Legal and administration, 11) Facilities and equipment, 12) Promotion and publicity

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.rfu.com/managingrugby/clubdevelopment/players/miniandyouth/youthsectionsealofapproval> (Accessed 29.01.2014)

Within each strand there were a number of elements, which had to be satisfied in order to achieve the *SoA* accreditation. Table 8.1 lists the documentation and templates produced by the RFU for clubs to follow in order to satisfy the criteria.

Table 8.1 Template documentation for (mini and youth) SoA

Document	
1	RFU questionnaire
2	Child Protection Policy
3	Child Protection Training
4	Club Codes of Conduct
5	First Aid Equipment
6	Emergency Procedures
7	Players Medical Information
8	Player/Parents Contact List
9	Coaching & competitive programme
10	Coaches Database
11	Mini & Youth section Job Descriptions
12	Coach/player ratios
13	Safe venue/equipment
14	Club Constitution
15	RFU Equal Opportunity/Sports Equity Policy
16	A Club for All
17	Equity in Your coaching
18	Affiliation to the RFU
19	Public liability certificate
20	Membership details/subscriptions
21	Parent Communications
22	Active Sports contact to liaise with Sport England
23	The club should have contact with at least one school/youth organisation
24	Commitment to Outreach Work
25	Mini/Youth Development Plan

Source: adapted from: <http://www.cobhamrfc.com/membership/rfu-seal-of-approval> (Accessed 29.01.14)

These documents aided clubs in satisfying the 44 elements of criteria contained within *SoA*, plus there were an additional 18 elements for the AHC. The process of achieving the accreditation is displayed in the guidance booklet (on page 10), which is illustrated in Figure 8.2.



Figure 8.2 (Mini and youth) Seal of Approval pathway

The process involved a RDO working with a club to explain the accreditation procedure, help to audit the club and support developing an Action Plan. The club would then start to collect the evidence and begin to create a development plan. Once a club had collated all of the required evidence and completed a Development Plan all of the documentation was sent to the Regional Rugby Development Manager (RRDM) for sign off. The club was then awarded Year 1 Mini and Youth *Seal of Approval*, which also automatically gave them SE *Clubmark* status. Then, for the subsequent two years the club had to complete an AHC. Three years after a club achieved the accreditation they were required to complete a full check of all the criteria and produce another Development Plan.

The following benefits of achieving the accreditation were stated in the guidance booklet (Rugby Football Development Limited, 2008):

- An increase in participation.
- An increase in the standard and number of coaches, referees and volunteers.
- Better links with the senior section of the club.
- Better links with the local community. (schools, colleges etc.)
- Clubs feel that their efforts are being recognised and rewarded.
- They are more sure that they are 'on the right track.'
- The process of accreditation helps the club analyse where they are and where they want to be (p. 4).

As can be seen, not only did the RFU suggest that the accreditation would enable clubs to assess the status of their club but links would be improved and participation would increase. The (mini and youth) *SoA* framework was implemented by the RFU for seven years. Then, in 2009 the policy received a major revision.

8.4.2 (Whole Club) *Seal of Approval*

The Whole Club *Seal of Approval* was introduced by the RFU during 2009 in an attempt to ensure high quality provision of rugby in all types of club. The 2009 *SoA* was designed so that clubs without children as part of their membership could also work towards a quality mark standard. The idea with the Whole Club *SoA* was to put clubs in a position where they could attempt to retain young players when they move from youth into adult rugby and to ensure the long term sustainability of rugby clubs (Rugby Football Development Limited, 2009). In addition to the benefits outlined in the Mini and Youth *SoA* the Whole Club *SoA* guidance document stated other benefits, which were:

- *Seal of Approval* accreditation enables a club to receive funding from the Rugby Football Foundation and access other rugby development funding.
- School Sports Partnerships are directed to only develop links with accredited clubs.
- International ticket allocations for *Seal of Approval* clubs will be enhanced.
- Use of the Whole Club *Seal of Approval* logo on the club's website and other promotional materials

Two of the benefits listed (funding and tickets) could be perceived as the RFU attempting to use remunerative compliance mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961) from the outset to increase the chances of implementation success. However, one of the primary reasons for

introducing an updated version of the *SoA* accreditation was explained by a senior RFU official:

We started getting quite a lot of pressure from clubs who didn't deliver mini rugby who wanted some kind of accreditation as well so we came up with a thing called the Whole Club *Seal of Approval* and both of those were loosely based on *Clubmark* but certainly included *Clubmark* but went beyond *Clubmark*. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

This quote demonstrates two important points. Firstly, the importance of street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 1980) in the process of implementation; the club members' increasing dissatisfaction that the accreditation consisted of numerous criteria irrelevant to many clubs initiated the RFU to evaluate *SoA* and eventually develop a new policy. The lobbying that set this new agenda correlates to Lukes' (1974) first face of power, which again highlights the significance of the club members during policy implementation in this context. The second point is in relation to the official stating that the RFU went 'beyond *Clubmark*.' The result of surpassing the *Clubmark* criteria meant that there were almost 70 elements of criteria, which needed to be satisfied. As will be seen by the end of this section, this number of criteria caused implementation difficulties for many clubs across the country.

The Whole Club *SoA* was based on the established procedures of Mini and Youth *SoA*. The Whole Club *SoA* pathway was identical to the Mini and Youth '*Seal of Approval* pathway', which is displayed in Figure 8.2. The five main areas and the 12 development strands of the accreditation remained but many of the criteria were updated. *SoA* now consisted of 67 (or 53 for adult only clubs) different criteria. Clubs were assessed by the RFU where they had to demonstrate evidence of good practice in areas such as club management, player development and recruitment, child protection, sports equity, coaching, refereeing and volunteering.¹⁰⁹ Figure 8.3 displays an example of some of the criteria from the first main area of 'people'.

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.amphillrufc.com/web/?services=approval> (Accessed 10.08.16)

	What is the criterion?	What evidence do we need?	Supporting Information and Resources	Whole Club SoA with Mini & Youth	Whole Club SoA Adults Only
	PEOPLE				
1	Players				
1.1	have at least one men's team	Copy of entry on RFU RugbyFirst and fixture list	The club must run at least one team that plays fixtures each year		
1.2	have a player Pathfinder registered on RFU RugbyFirst	Copy of entry on RFU RugbyFirst	Your local RDO will organise Pathfinder training and provide Pathfinder support resources E-mail: rugbyfirstsupport@therfu.com or phone 0870 999 2003 for assistance with RFU RugbyFirst		

Figure 8.3 Extract of Whole Club SoA criteria

Classical top-down implementation theorists, such as Hogwood and Gunn (1984), note that changes in policy are often met with suspicion by those affected by the change. When resistance (or conflict) does occur Matland (1995) suggests that a policy would be characterised as being situated in either a *political* or *symbolic* implementation state, depending on the level of ambiguity. In an effort to reduce any potential resistance the RFU tried to reassure club members that the change in *Clubmark* policy would not cause an increased workload in one of the first pages of the Whole Club SoA guidance document (Rugby Football Development Limited, 2009):

You will probably be doing much of this already, particularly if your club is already Mini and Youth Seal of Approval accredited - it is now a matter of gathering and updating evidence on all of your good work so far. (p. 3)

Furthermore, the first point of 'Phase one' in the Whole Club SoA step-by-step guide clearly placed the onus of implementing SoA with the clubs and made the members question the status of their club (to ensure they were in an appropriate position to embark on the accreditation process):

Before you begin the process you need to ensure your club is committed to the programme and that the management committee of your club is willing to be responsible for implementation. (p. 4)

One of the members from STRC suggested that RFU staff had also adopted normative mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961) in attempts to gain compliance:

There was a carrot. If you get your *Seal of Approval* then you get this and that! And you got more assistance if you did it so it was beneficial for the club to do it. (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15)

Once a club had achieved the accreditation standard (and therefore SE *Clubmark* status) the club was required to work towards targets as set out in their Development Plan. The RDO then visited the club to ensure the club had met the targets. In addition, it was a requirement for the club to complete a 27-point AHC in the same way as was done for the Mini and Youth *SoA*. Figure 8.4 displays a selection of the criteria, which needed to be satisfied. It can also be seen that there were two columns to distinguish clubs with mini and youth sections and adult only clubs; adult only clubs did not have to satisfy criteria 2.2 and 5.4, for example. By doing this the RFU created an accreditation that was more relevant to a greater proportion of its club membership. However, This 27-point AHC in addition to 67 (or 53) main criteria made the accreditation process very time-consuming, as a member of TRC explained:

it was a booklet, a very thick booklet with hundreds of pages of information and things that we've got to do...[SoA took a] long time...it was 2, 3 hours every Wednesday night...quite a long while and then [the RDO] would come in and help with things that we were unsure about so there was a lot of paperwork to do...you can't even believe how thick the document was, it was absolutely massive. (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

Members of STRC shared the sentiments of TRC members as this example demonstrates:

I know it [SoA] was a long, arduous procedure. I don't see it meant much, apart from to keep up with reams of data...The plaque turned up in the post but I didn't see any difference. (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15)

ANNUAL HEALTH CHECK CRITERIA					
PLEASE SAVE THIS SPREADSHEET TO YOUR DESKTOP BEFORE MAKING ANY AMENDMENTS					
KEY CRITERIA	EVIDENCE	Whole Club with M&Y	Whole Club Adult Only	CHECKED	
PEOPLE					
1 Players					
1.2	have a player Pathfinder registered on RFU RugbyFirst	Copy of entries on RFU RugbyFirst			
2 Coaches					
2.1	have one Level 2 coach for the adult section have one Level 1 coach per adult team	Copy of entries on RFU RugbyFirst			
2.2	have one Level 2 Coach for the mini section and one for the youth section have one Level 1 Coach per age group team	Copy of entries on RFU RugbyFirst			
2.4	have a Club Coaching Coordinator (CCC) registered on RFU RugbyFirst	Copy of entry on RFU RugbyFirst RFU CDO to confirm as active			
3 Referees					
3.3	have a Club Referee Coordinator (CRefC) registered on RFU RugbyFirst	Copy of entry on RFU RugbyFirst RFU RefDM or RefDO to confirm as active			
4 Volunteers					
4.3	have a Club Volunteer Coordinator (CVC) registered on RFU RugbyFirst	Copy of entry on RFU RugbyFirst RFU Volunteer Executive to confirm as active			
MEMBER SERVICES					
5 Playing and Training					
5.4	adhere to the following RFUW guidelines: The RFU Continuum for U7 to U12 boys and girls. The RFU and RFUW Youth Structured Seasons for U13 to U18 boys and U12, U15 and U18 girls*	Copy of clubs fixture and training programme			

Figure 8.4 Sample of the Whole Club SoA Annual Health Check

Although the process was a time-consuming process the RFU had invested a lot of time into developing detailed guidance documentation for the club members to follow. This was recognised by one of the members of STRC:

Seal of Approval was actually very well written. It said, “you needed this, you needed that” and there were job descriptions, we needed to do first aid etc. It was all in there...To be honest, once you’d got *Seal of Approval* it was quite easy to keep it up to date. You just had to change names etc. The RDO came twice to inspect. The first, I think, was to check that what we had in there was factual. He complemented me on my work! (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15)

The club member was clearly proud of his efforts and enjoyed the feedback from the RDO. He went onto describe how he thought that *SoA* had improved the club because, “more people wanted to go on courses...Volunteers is always a problem – keeping the numbers up for coaching.” (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15)

However, the perception of the application process for *SoA* as an arduous and time-consuming process for club members was not contained to TRC and STRC, it was a nationwide perception. The negative perceptions of the lengthy accreditation process and

implementation difficulties were fed back to the RFU via the RDOs and RRDMs. A senior RFU representative recalled instances he was aware of:

I mean there's some horror stories that it was taking a year, 18 months to get through the process, taking up all volunteer time, people losing focus on what the club was supposed to be doing and the club was suffering as a consequence just trying to get accredited. The whole thing was just getting way, way, way out of hand...it was so onerous! (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

In addition, each year, the RFU Funding and Facility Managers and SE conducted random spot checks of clubs with *SoA* status to ensure national consistency. However, the monitoring process often resulted in additional workload for the volunteers who had to prepare their evidence to be sent for the checks (or prepare for a site visit). Nevertheless, this was an opportunity for clubs to feed back to the RFU that the *SoA* accreditation process was a long, time-consuming practice. The club feedback was one of the primary reasons that the RFU initiated an assessment of the *SoA* accreditation process.

8.5 RFU Club Accreditation

In 2012, the RFU introduced a new 'quality mark' framework, which was simply termed RFU *Club Accreditation (CA)*, replacing the *SoA* accreditation framework. According to a senior RFU representative, by their own admission, the *SoA* process had "become cumbersome and detracted from the main purpose of a rugby club: to deliver quality rugby in the community" (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). In fact, the official continued to display his dissatisfaction, "I don't even know where *Clubmark* is these days, I lost interest in *Clubmark* years ago because it was too heavyweight for what we wanted to achieve anyway." (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

The RFU developed CA, which was not fundamentally based on Sport England's *Clubmark*, and contained far fewer criteria in comparison to the *SoA* accreditation. Rather than clubs having to satisfy nearly 70 criteria elements the new CA consisted of a 'core purpose' and six key drivers comprising of just 15 criteria (see Appendix G). The core value of the game was defined as: 'strengthening our member clubs and growing the game in communities around them'¹¹⁰. The core value and six key drivers, identified as crucial to a strong club, are displayed in Figure 8.5.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/legal-and-admin/club-accreditation/> (Accessed 08.08.16)

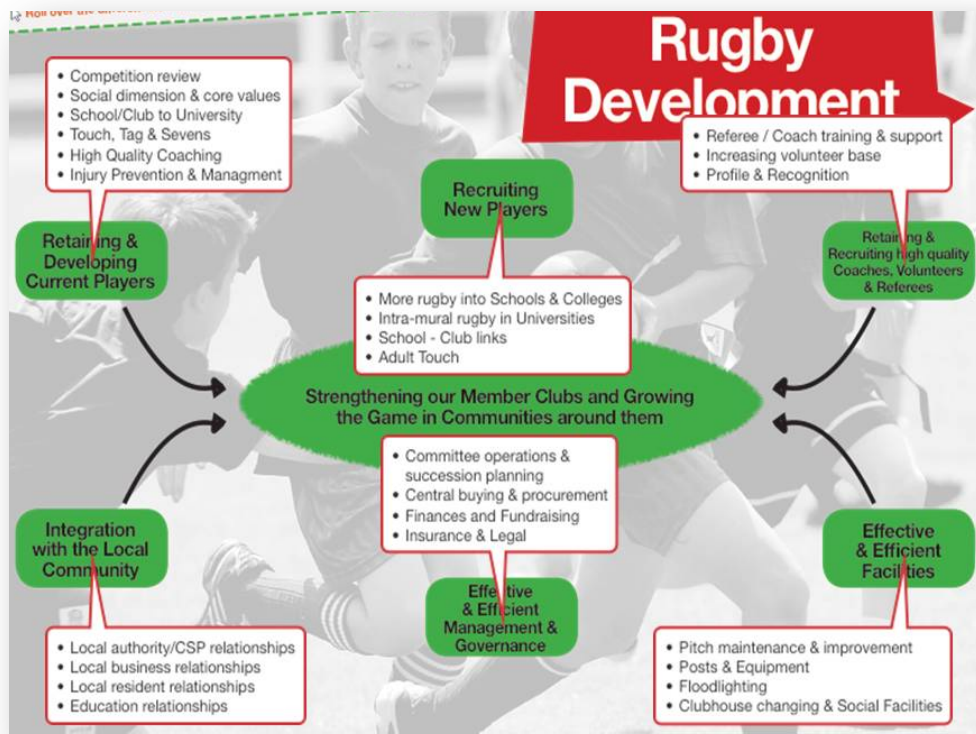


Figure 8.5 RFU's Club Accreditation core value and key drivers

The RFU stated that the core value and each of the key drivers represented the component parts of a strong, sustainable club. The RFU message was that the new CA framework was considerably more straightforward than *SoA* and was designed to both recognise and assist a club to continually improve, while demonstrating a real commitment to providing the best environment for its club members (England Rugby, 2014). In addition to CA being far simpler, the framework consisted of supplementary sections that were specific to distinct groups within the RFU membership: adults; mini and youth; women and girls; and touch rugby.

Another characteristic of CA was that it was designed so that there were no levels or tiers within the framework. One senior RFU representative did not hesitate to provide his forthright views on tiered accreditation systems, "Club Accreditation is nice and simple. Either you're accredited or you're not. Why have different levels? It seems nonsense to me." (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). Another senior RFU official explained the decision process:

We looked at a tiered system and we discounted it because we just basically went, "this just is going to be so bureaucratic and...you've got people in clubs who can write and can talk

the talk but they don't walk the walk...if I'm honest...I could have sat down one night and just wrote it all and got it stamped through the process but who gains with that? Nobody really. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

This personal reflection raises an issue of fundamental importance to this case study. The bottom-up implementation literature suggests that those at the point of delivery are central to being able to develop the understanding of policy implementation (Berman, 1978; Hjern & Hull, 1982b; Lipsky, 1980). In the previous two case studies there were narratives of NGB officials (the policy makers) being disconnected from the 'real world', which was a perception the NGBs were working on altering that perception. In fact, later on in this chapter RFU officials explain the difficult relationships they used to endure with club members. Therefore, with the senior RFU official having the street-level knowledge and experience (he was also involved in an athletics club) he was able to clearly understand the day-to-day struggles of implementing the *Clubmark* policy. Armed with this knowledge and the club feedback the RFU officials set about writing their own quality mark.

With the CA framework, the fundamental purpose of the new accreditation was to make the process less burdensome and easier to understand for the club members. Therefore, this senior RFU official described the process they went through:

[With] the original Club Accreditation template, we started off with those six drivers, we said ok...what do these look like and if you look underneath that, what would we want a club to be thinking about if it was returning and developing its players? What would we want the club to be thinking about if it was recruiting new players? And we just wrote statements, we did two or three sessions with a group of our RDOs where we basically got them to help us get the wording right so they felt comfortable with it; it was accessible language. If you make this too bureaucratic and too grand, it just won't work. Then the guys involved in the group went out, did it with a couple of friendly clubs and as a result of that we tinkered with it a bit and that was it, we made the decision we were going for it. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

Once again, this was an extremely sensible implementation approach adopted by the RFU. When designing and writing the new policy they focused heavily on the street-level bureaucrats to ensure it would be clearly understood by club members and a manageable process. The pilot testing allowed the RFU to develop a feasible policy to be implemented. At this point the policy would be located in Matland's (1995) *experimental* implementation.

A significant point to consider for implementation is that although the RFU moved away from SE's *Clubmark* framework to produce their own (simplified) quality mark framework, CA was eventually recognised by SE as being an equivalent to *Clubmark*. Consequently, once a rugby club achieved CA they automatically became SE *Clubmark* accredited at the same time. Being able to automatically award clubs with *Clubmark* status when awarded the CA was perceived as significant by the RFU, as this senior official explained:

Was it [*Clubmark*] important to us that our clubs were still able to feel part of it? Yes. Why? Because many local authorities, county sports partnerships and others would recognise a *Clubmark* club as being a credible, quality club and hence they would invest in them (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

Due to the fact that the RFU understood the potential benefits of the *Clubmark* reputation it could bring to its members the NGB entered a process of negotiation with SE on behalf of the clubs. A senior RFU official explained that there were only a couple of meetings and the process was not complex or complicated:

What we did was we basically agreed with Sport England that we would lay our [CA] process alongside their [*Clubmark*] process and if there were any gaps in our process that wouldn't meet theirs, then they'd tell us and we'd adjust it...So, we got to the point where we had a process that met our needs that also satisfied their demands. So, from our clubs perspective they can become Club Accredited and as part of that they get a *Clubmark*. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The comment demonstrates how, through the process of negotiation, the RFU were able to secure a mutually acceptable version of their Club Accreditation framework, which satisfied the minimum requirements of *Clubmark*. This negotiation process reveals an interesting power and resource dependence paradox; although the RFU abandoned SE's quality mark, the NGB felt that *Clubmark* legitimised the RFU's Club Accreditation to external stakeholders (such as LAs and schools) so entered a discussion with SE. Furthermore, it demonstrates how SE did not want to lose one of their largest, most prosperous recognised NGBs from delivering their quality mark, as it would weaken the value of their accreditation.

The RFU Club Accreditation became "hugely popular" (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13) with clubs. In a press release on the RFU website one senior RFU manager remarked that, "there are now over 600 clubs accredited under the new RFU Club Accreditation that was launched in 2012. We had to ensure that the new system was simpler for clubs than the

previous Seal of Approval procedure, which ended with the launch of the new RFU Club Accreditation Scheme.”¹¹¹

8.5.1 Club Accreditation Process

The RFU did not force clubs to work towards CA. The RFU only wanted clubs that were in appropriate positions and subscribed to the CA implementation process, as this senior RFU official explained:

If the club doesn't see the value of it to them [that is their choice]...at the end of the day they're the custodians of their club, they own their club, they run their club...It's up to us over time to extol the virtues of it [CA] to them. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

In the way that sometime 'carrots were dangled' during the implementation of *SoA*, similar compliance techniques (or remunerative mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961)) were adopted for CA, as this senior RFU official explained:

We use it [CA] to reward sometimes. So, for example, when we just launched our young rugby ambassadors' programme, which is one of our World Cup legacy programmes we approached, I think it was about 160 clubs to start with, accredited clubs. If you apply to us for a facility grant, you either have to be accredited to apply or we will make it a condition of your grant that you gain accreditation within a 12-month period. So, there are kind of sticks and carrots that we can use but we don't want to say you have to do it because the minute you start to say that, you're on the highway to nowhere (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

Once a club subscribed to the process and commenced working towards CA they were required to undertake a simple self-review of their activities. This could be completed prior to meeting with the RDO, or it could be completed with the RDO guiding the club through the process. On the *Club Accreditation* page on the RFU website, the RFU once again reiterated the point that they perceived the key policy implementers were the club members themselves, not the RFU:

Since this is your [underlined on the website] accreditation, the RDO will simply "coach" you through the session, asking relevant questions and details to strengthen your review.¹¹²

The club would work through the 15 criteria, which generally only took a couple of sessions with a RDO. Then, once completed the RDO advises the club to identify just three

¹¹¹ <http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/legal-and-admin/club-accreditation/> (Accessed 20.08.16)

¹¹² <http://www.englandrugby.com/news/club-accreditation-1289917/> (Accessed 17.07.16)

action points to work towards. One senior RFU official explained why only three criteria, “we reckon if a club’s trying to work on thee things it’s plenty. If you get them to work on a 10 point action plan, they’ll probably never deliver it so get them to work on thee things and do them really well and it’ll make a change in the club” (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14). Once again, this recognition by the RFU corresponds with the implementation literature; top-down theorists, such as Hogwood and Gunn (1984), suggest that implementation of policy often fails when too much is expected too soon. By reducing the number of tasks the clubs can ensure adequate resources are available to achieve the targets. One senior RFU official explained CA as being “a classic self-review model.” He elaborated by suggesting:

I always say in development work, our job is at work to make ourselves redundant. It’s what you should be doing in development work. Our ultimate goal is that you’ve helped somebody do it for themselves and you’re no longer needed. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

Once a club has satisfied all criteria and has been signed off by the RDO the work is sent for review. Once the reviewers are happy with the documentation a letter of congratulations is sent to the club (copied to the CB), which outlines the subsequent steps. A certificate and plaque are sent to the RDO, then a presentation is arranged with the RDO, CB representative and the club. Before the certificate is framed the president of the union, the president of the CB and the president of the club sign it. The RFU follow this process as they feel it is important, as this senior official explained:

It’s not just tokenism...By the president of the club physically having to sign it and the president of the constituent body physically having to sign it, there’s something quite symbolic in that which says, this club is only going to continue to achieve success if these three parts of the system work together to help them so it’s not top-down...it’s actually we the club have decided that we’re an accredited club. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

This reveals an interesting point in relation to the RFU’s implementation strategy in that they attempted to balance out power, and not be perceived as dictatorial. The RFU official wanted club members (the street-level bureaucrats) to feel as though they were accreditation peers, which would suggest that this is also part of the strategy to improve club and RFU relationships. Relationships are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

A final, crucial, point about the CA process was that all clubs accredited with *SoA* automatically transferred across to the new accreditation and were awarded CA status, “because it was a much lighter accreditation” (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). This was a sensible approach by the RFU. It was seen in the swimming case study that with one of the

swim21 iterations there was no option of automatic transfer (or transition period) to the new policy, which resulted in many clubs dropping out of the process, suffering implementation failure. However, clubs that were part way through the either of the *SoA* process were required to stop and commence working towards the new CA framework. On the whole, there was no evidence of serious resistance with this requirement; primarily due to the fact that the new accreditation needed far less work (in comparison) and much of the evidence collected for *SoA* could have been used for CA.

In fact, the RFU made a big deal of awarding CA to the clubs that had achieved Whole Club *SoA* by hosting a large-scale presentation ceremony at Twickenham where over 100 clubs attended. Although this gesture was generally well received, one senior RFU representative explained how he heard some discontent at the ceremony:

Bit of moaning, “why have you just made us go through this year-long process and now you’re just dishing these things out like confetti?” But you know, it’s a happy moment for everyone (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

Notwithstanding the minor discontent at the award ceremony, the CA process proved to be a success and fewer clubs faced implementation difficulties. At this point it could be said that the CA policy would be located somewhere between *administrative* and *experimental* implementation due to the increased acceptance (therefore, low conflict) of the new process (Matland, 1995). Available resources (primarily volunteers) and contextual conditions of clubs determined outcomes and the success of implementation. In January 2014 there were already over 500 clubs that had achieved the CA status. Once a RDO has signed off the accreditation they are forwarded the RFU headquarters so a selection can be moderated. Then, once a month a batch of plaques are distributed to the clubs that have achieved the accreditation to put up in their clubhouses, which they love (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14). Clubs also have the opportunity to celebrate their accreditation locally with their RDO and Constituent Body, while the RFU publishes the list of accredited clubs bi-monthly in the Touchline newsletter and on the RFU website.

8.6 The RFU’s Club Development Team

The Rugby Development Director (RDD) is responsible for all grassroots rugby development in England. The team that the RDD managed is displayed in Figure 8.1, which included the 50 RDOs who were the staff that supported clubs through the CA process.

There were numerous factors, which affected implementation of CA, and these will now be discussed in greater detail.

8.6.1 Management of *Clubmark* and Club Accreditation

The RFU were not given targets in relation to a certain number of clubs working towards accreditation by SE. This was a deliberate, strategic choice made by the RFU, as this senior official explained:

We would have some notional (under the table) targets that we would want to aspire to. We'll sit down at some point and go, "we're up to 500 now, how many more do you think we should get through next year?" We won't publish it and we won't make it a target because we're not going to get to a position where we become obsessive about the number of clubs that get it because the clubs have got to want it. It's got to mean something to them. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The deliberate decision of not having accreditation targets matched the approaches adopted by EB and the ASA. All three NGBs recommended that only clubs in appropriate positions should work towards the respective quality marks. When a rugby club worked towards accreditation – as discussed previously – the RDOs were the point of contact, they are RFU's "feet on the ground" (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). Each RDO had between 20-30 clubs that they worked closely with (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14). The role of the RDO was described on the local district RFU website as:

RDO's are generally the first port of call for clubs; there are three working within [the district], one in each county. They are responsible for the provision of high quality local development support to the clubs within their area and work to strengthen the capacity, membership and performance of these clubs.¹¹³

The information demonstrates the important role of these officers; they offered clubs guidance and, as the excerpt states, strengthen a club's capacity by offering capacity-building support consistent with a top-down implementation model. In comparison with the two other case studies rugby had a significantly greater support structure. The RFU had 52 RDOs to support clubs across England whereas the equivalent role in swimming (CDOs) had a workforce of nine and boxing's equivalent role (CSOs) consisted of nine, which was reduced to seven at the end of 2015. The variation in the support capacity of each NGB in proportion to the numbers of each NGB's membership is also striking. For

¹¹³ Website URL available at examiner's request

example, the membership numbers for rugby and boxing were not too dissimilar, however, rugby had over five times the level of support staff.

Although the RDOs played an important role for implementation of CA, the RFU recognised what their level of involvement should have been, “[Club] volunteers are the implementers, the RDOs are there to support and point in the right direction” (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). The RFU clearly defined their officials’ roles during a club’s CA process. As mentioned previously, CA was designed as a continuous self-reviewing process for the clubs where RDOs engaged with the members offering accreditation guidance to them but also to prompt them to question certain aspects of their club, especially development. One senior RFU official viewed the role as, “just setting an agenda really for change” (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14), which corresponds to Lukes (1974) first face of power. One member from TRC described the approach their RDO adopted during their (SoA) accreditation process:

we used to fill a lot of stuff in and then [the RDO] would come in and say, “right ok we’ve done that” He would take it off to his office and do various other bits and say “right, you need to do this.” He would check it for us because obviously he’s done them with lots of clubs so there’d be bits that we’d fill in and he’d say “oh no you’ve not quite got that right so redo that, everything else is fine.” He’d check everything for us and really helped us a lot. (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

The club member continued to heap praise on the effort of the RDO:

[The RDO] was very, very good and he was here a lot, he did help us a lot...I don’t think we would have managed to do it without him...he actually checked it all and made sure that we had done it right. (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

Although the RDO clearly offered a great deal of support during the SoA process it is a demonstration of how time-consuming it was for the RDO, particularly when they had between 20-30 clubs to support. This is why the introduction of the more manageable CA process (for both the RFU and club members) has been crucial for implementation success.

8.6.2 Importance of club volunteers

As already established in the previous two case studies the role of club volunteers (comparable to Lipsky’s (1980) street-level bureaucrats) is vital for the success of *Clubmark* implementation. If the club members did not accept the accreditation process,

intended implementation objectives were often not achieved. During implementation of *SoA* many club members could not see the benefit of achieving the accreditation status. This resulted in RDOs spending hours over periods of up to a year and a half, in some cases, which limited their capacity with other clubs. With the new CA process, figures already indicate that far more clubs have embraced the simplified framework and found the process significantly more manageable.

It was important that a club had a willing group of individuals who would engage in an accreditation process, which is why the RFU reiterated this point in the accreditation guidance documentation. Without the core of individuals implementation is likely to fail. Even if a club started a process with a group of individuals, there was always possibility that club circumstances could change, which would impact implementation as this quote demonstrates:

There were times when people left and we got new people in and they didn't have the right qualifications, getting them up to speed didn't happen straight away. It took time to replace somebody. (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15)

This is just one example used just to highlight the type of day-to-day issues the policy service deliverers in the clubs faced. Inadequate resources available can lead to bottlenecks, which slow down implementation (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).

8.6.3 Role of CSP officers

CSP officers did not guide or support clubs through CA (and did not when the RFU implemented *SoA*). The involvement CSP officers had with rugby was in the form of supporting clubs to run rugby festivals and offer support to satellite clubs¹¹⁴. One CSP officer confirmed their position in the county:

The RDO leads *Clubmark* in rugby union, not the CSP sport development officer. The RFU probably have the capacity and don't need the extra support. (Interviewee CSP, 14.05.15)

The role of the RDO is strongly club focused, and the CSPs take greater responsibility with the targeted initiatives, supported by the network of CRCs. For implementation of *Clubmark* (including CA) this enabled the RFU to offer the clubs increased support.

¹¹⁴ A satellite club are extensions of a community sports club (hub club), which forms links with a school or college to offer the 11-25 age group new sporting experiences. It is a SE initiative, supported by CSPs and NGBs.

8.8 Development of RFU knowledge

8.8.1 Seal of Approval accreditation process

Subsequent to the introduction of *SoA* in 2002, over time, the RFU developed its knowledge about implementation of the framework. One senior RFU official described how he learned to appreciate the contextual variations across the clubs and that it was important to gather as much information as possible before making strategic decisions or enacting change:

When you talk, when you're out there in the game constantly, you'll hear a whole pile of local moans, everybody's got them. I mean if I talk you to 10 clubs, we'd pick up 10 different issues because they're very localised. If we did that for five successive days and went round 50 clubs we'd probably get to the end of the week and we'd go right, there's one or two themes here that are emerging. You hear it once and you go OK it's localised, you hear it twice and you go yeah OK, localised; you start to hear it three, four, five times in different areas of the country and you go there's a trend here. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

With both versions of *SoA* the most common feedback was that it was time-consuming, very complicated and clubs were not sure that they were getting much value from the accreditation. On the flip side, clubs were suggesting that it was a valuable process, however, it took too long to complete and there were far too many criteria (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14). A senior RFU official stated that it got to a point where he felt something had to be addressed, "I'm hearing so much negativity about it that we've got to stop and we've got to change it...so we've got to try and develop something that's going to be simple enough that the majority...feel it's accessible and they feel it's achievable (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14). Another RFU official echoed those sentiments regarding Whole Club *SoA* by suggesting it "was overkill, total overkill." (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). There was one other instance that caused consternation for a senior RFU official while he was attending a Whole Club *SoA* presentation ceremony at Twickenham, where approximately 20 clubs were in attendance:

[Club members were] very proud, very honoured to be here and to get their presentation, but the conversation I had with one volunteer who said, "it's taken me two years to get this and now I've had enough...And I'm going, "this can't be right, this is a volunteer who's got a lot to offer the sport" ...[so], this structure that we're putting around [clubs], albeit a very useful process, was only ever going to work for a small number of clubs (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14).

Therefore, this realisation coupled with the other negative feedback initiated the change in accreditation policy.

8.8.1 Club Accreditation knowledge

With the introduction of CA it was a demonstration by the RFU of a willingness to be flexible with their implementation strategy. Once the senior officials at the RFU were fully aware of the *SoA* issues they set about overhauling the accreditation process. The RFU took the strategic decision to focus on the bulk of its members (i.e. not the top few percent of extremely well-run, organised clubs, or the small percentage of clubs at the bottom that were really struggling), as this senior RFU official explained:

There's this big chunk in the middle that are going "come on we're willing, we just want help, we just want to know what we should be doing, we just want a bit of a nudge." So, we consciously focused on that middle group...It's [CA] definitely a work in process no doubt about it, but it's simple, clubs understand it, clubs get it, clubs feel valued and it's a bit like a mini development plan, that's what we've done. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

This quote demonstrates an important point in relation to a successful implementation strategy; there was recognition by the RFU of the varying capacity of the clubs (the implementing agents) so focused on the clubs they felt were capable of implementing a new accreditation policy and would provide least resistance (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).

8.8.1 Club contexts and capacity

In relation to variation between clubs, the RFU officials provided other circumstances, which affected implementation. For example, the attraction of being able to proudly display the red rose plaque (to signify a club had achieved accreditation) in the clubhouse was not an attraction for some clubs:

The problem with rugby clubhouses, they're so diverse and the circumstances are so different...We find a number of clubs in urban areas - London particularly - there are three well established clubs, all of whom operate out of a pub. They haven't even got a clubhouse but they're really well established, respected rugby clubs. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

It was for clubs like these (with no clubhouse) that implementing *SoA* became problematic. For example, the requirement of criterion 7.8 was to 'display welfare policies, protocols and personnel in the clubhouse and on the club website' (Rugby Football

Development Limited, 2009, p. 20). Clearly, with no clubhouse this was not relevant and impossible to satisfy.

As seen in the swimming case study no community club in England owned their own facility. Similarly, very few boxing clubs owned their own premises. As a result clubs had to hire and share facilities. Rugby had a higher percentage of clubs owning their own facilities, which made it less important (for some) to achieve *SoA/Clubmark/CA*. However, in some areas of the country, such as in London, pitches were often situated on local authority land, which meant clubs could not afford to buy their own grounds and were leased. This led to some clubs having difficulty in securing funding due to criteria stipulating a level of tenure on clubhouse and grounds before funding could be awarded. So, this was a real challenge for urban run clubs (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13).

There was further recognition by a senior RFU official in relation to how the varying capacity of clubs affected implementation of *CA*, and the result was that each club experienced a range of outcomes from the same policy.

So what does an accredited club mean really? It doesn't mean it's an all singing, all dancing club that's perfect, it means it's a club that knows its own strengths, knows its own weaknesses, has identified its areas for development and is committed to working on them, can't really ask any more than that from a bunch of volunteers (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

This range in outcomes as a result of contextual variations resonates with Matland's (1995) *experimental* implementation. He suggested that contextual conditions dominate the process and outcomes "depend heavily on the resources and actors present in the microimplementing environment" (p. 166). Furthermore, the RFU official's comment demonstrates a clear awareness of the important role of club members during the implementation process.

8.8.2 Communication

Clear communication is imperative for successful implementation. However, Hogwood and Gunn (1984) suggested perfect communication is unattainable. The RFU acknowledged that communicating with volunteers was always difficult. One RFU official suggested that, "trying to communicate through post and email just fails, the only way to do it is face-to-face." He then provided an example from his experience:

There was a Middlesex general committee meeting last night where all our clubs are invited. It was a financial annual general meeting to approve the council and so every club's

invited. There were 20 clubs there, a third of them, so they don't show up to meetings. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

Therefore, the RFU adopted techniques in an attempt to ensure their communication was effective with its members. They produced a newspaper, called Touchline, which was published and delivered to all member clubs every two months. The RFU used it to communicate positive news, "otherwise nobody would read it." (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). In one of the publications they were planning to include an insert in the form of an A3 poster full of important information, which was specifically designed for clubs to display in their clubhouse. The RFU learned that if they needed to circulate key information, the newsletter was a quick and easy method.

Other RFU communication methods were through their Constituent Bodies and directly to clubs via email and post. However, the RFU found that effectively communicating important information directly to clubs was problematic, as this RFU official explained:

It's hit and miss frankly because you can send an email or a letter to the honorary sec., some of them never even get opened...So, for me, the best way to do that is regular meaningful contact between Rugby Development Officers and the officers of the club. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

One member from TRC described how he received communication:

I mean we get emails regular from the [league] office. There's a girl at the [league] office, who's the office manager and she's always emailing, I'll get half a dozen emails a week about various things, competitions, grants that are up for grabs...I get them from the RFU as well...It's just basically, you know, word through email mostly. (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

Even though the RFU had taken steps to ensure they effectively communicated with their members evidence from STRC suggested that it could be improved further:

We were not aware to start with that *SoA* has stopped and CA had taken it over! It only came about when myself and the previous secretary went down to a rugby expo. down at Twickenham and there was a presentation about CA! So, it was us who contacted the RDO, he came down with two bits of paper and said, "there you go, fill that out and then we will go from there." So, it was a 20-minute chat one night. There was no communication and I still don't fully understand why it's changed! Apart from - I'm told - the process is less arduous. But there doesn't seem to be any reward for it, other than you, as a club, being a little bit sharper at providing the RFU with information! (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15)

Another member was also unsure as to what the new CA process entailed:

I wanna know what CA involves – I've not seen it. We are waiting for the RDO. I would've expected him to give us the [CA] information, we sat down with him but since that meeting I've not seen anything. I think the secretary needs to chase him.

(Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15)

Although members from both clubs in this case study were not fully aware of the reasons behind the introduction of a new accreditation framework, one member of STRC demonstrated that he had a good understanding of the CA:

Seal of Approval seemed more data driven – how many teachers, how many coaches etc. Whereas, CA seems more development driven....it's an ongoing once a year sit down to see if you've achieved your targets. My understanding is that it's a rolling process. (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15)

8.8.2.1 Relationship between the RFU and clubs

As previously discussed, a number of issues had arisen from the lengthy *SoA* process. Another issue that affected implementation was relationship breakdowns, which is what this RFU official described:

[*SoA*] just sucked everybody dry, you never got the right kind of interaction with the RFU staff. It was one of resentment because they were coming in with their 20-page checklists and people were having to put in place all these policy booklets and made people go through the crap the accreditation process. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

Therefore, the CA framework was specifically designed to be a lightweight process subsequent to the plethora of negative feedback associated with *SoA*. The notion was to make the process simple enough so that every club in England, if they wished, could become accredited. A senior RFU official explained the logic being:

What I was trying to achieve was a much closer relationship between the club and the Rugby Union because if somebody walks in to a club and sees the bloody great big red rose on the wall in front of them, you've immediately created that connection. Then, with clubs buying into what we're trying to do as a union much more, it also gave us an excuse for our Rugby Development Officers, or for us [senior RFU officials], to actually get themselves into the club and work with the club officials to achieve that accreditation. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

The approach of actively visiting clubs face-to-face was comparable with the 'closer to home' narrative strategy the senior officials at England Boxing were attempting to achieve.

The RFU made a substantial commitment as an organisation to improve support for the clubs, as this RFU official explained, “[we now have] field staff, we’ve also got facilities experts with feet on the ground, we’ve got volunteer people, we’ve got referee people, we’ve got coach people. So, that whole network all in all is pushing 200 people with feet on the ground, a lot of people to offer support (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). Considering the number of feet on the ground in the rugby context in comparison with just nine CSO support staff (which was reduced to seven at the end of 2015) that England Boxing had available clearly highlights the substantial increase in capacity the RFU had available at their disposal and the struggles EB officials faced when attempting to support their clubs. That is why CSP officers had to be utilised in the boxing context.

Evidence suggested that with the RFU taking on board the clubs’ feedback, visiting the clubs more often and simplifying the accreditation process (therefore reducing implementation complexity) the relationship between clubs and the RFU started to improve, as this quote indicates:

So, the feedback we [now] get from clubs is, they’re seeing our guys a lot more, this [CA] process along with all the other tools that we offer is, is, is helping them. You’re always going to get more from a club that’s just had a 60,000 quid set of floodlights from you than a club who has just been disciplined for something, that’s just the world of sport. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The simplified CA process enabled the RDOs to free up a substantial amount of their time (rather than spending hours guiding clubs through the heavyweight *SoA* process), which allowed them to visit more clubs. The RDOs were instructed to spend time in the club with the club officers getting to know them and “forming personal relationships, which is what makes the world go round” (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). One RFU official described how he had seen a marked change in attitude towards the RFU:

Certainly the feedback we’re getting from the big changes we made two years ago, we’re finally getting the RDOs feeding back that the clubs think it’s fantastic. Interestingly...two or three years ago, you were going round the country going to meetings at clubs and they were all bitching about the RFU...”what are you doing for us and you’re just a bunch of idiots living in Twickenham, you know nothing about the real world” and now they are saying fantastic things, great support from you now so happy days (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13).

Another RFU official described a similar theme that he had experienced:

I do two or three sets of road shows every year, where I just go out on the road, into different CBs and get them to invite all their clubs and it's changed significantly since the first set I did when there was bricks being thrown at us basically! And one of the hardest challenges that we've got is breaking that down. We get a lot of "the RFU this, the RFU is that". So, it's just building that relationship with them and getting them to realise and recognise that we're not some enforcer, that we're actually there to help them (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The improvement in the RFU and club relationship is important. Hogwood and Gunn (1984) recommended that conflicts of interest cause disruption to implementation. They suggested that for a policy to have any chance of successful implementation an understanding of, and agreement on, objectives is required, where tasks need to be specified in the right sequence via perfect communication and co-ordination.

Members from both TRC and STRC remarked how they had noticed an improved relationship with the RFU. The RFU understood that not every club was happy but wanted to, "open the communication channels up enough so that they [club members] feel confident enough to come and tell us [if they are dissatisfied] and that's all you can do really. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

8.8.3 Club pride

When the senior RFU official had started to visit clubs one of the things that struck him was that the RFU rose was not displayed anywhere, which gave him an idea, as he explained:

I would say our three greatest assets as a union are our stadium, the rose and the England team. So, why wouldn't we use them as much as we possibly can? And what that means is you can't really drive the stadium into every club in the land! And you can't take the [England] team into every club in the land but the thing you can get in there is the rose. And we, people, feel proud of it (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14).

Therefore, during the final few years of awarding *SoA* and when awarding *CA* a club is presented with a large plaque with the red rose emblazoned on it accompanied with the *SoA* logo. When TRC were awarded their *SoA* accreditation they found it a special moment, as this member recalled:

As a club we made a massive thing about it [SoA] we've got the photos up on the wall, we've got the certificates up there, it is a big thing and it was a lot of hard work...We wanted to be able to compete in the [league] competitions, and at the time they were saying, "if you haven't got a child protection policy that's up to date and you've not done the *Seal of Approval* then you won't be able to get grants, you might not be affiliated with the RFU anymore" So, it's just something that we strived to do and a lot of other clubs followed. Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

Although the TRC member suggested that working towards SoA was something the club wanted to do and they were very proud of achieving the accreditation, the comment also clearly demonstrates how the RFU officials adopted a combination of normative (legitimacy of the RFU and being able to play in the leagues), coercive (threats of sanctions if non-compliant, such as, "you might not be affiliated") and remunerative (talk of grants) compliance mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961).

8.9 Safeguarding

As noted in the boxing chapter, it is important to note that safeguarding in rugby union is, similarly, primarily considered in relation to extrinsic issues such as bullying and sexual abuse. However, there are other intrinsic dimensions, which also complicate the issue of safeguarding. For example, there have been increasing debates in the media¹¹⁵ and the literature surrounding the issue of injuries – in particular, instances of concussion – in rugby union (see Fraas, Coughlan, Hart, & McCarthy, 2014; Gardner, Iverson, Williams, Baker, & Stanwell, 2014; Piggitt & Pollock, 2016). Following the approach adopted in the boxing chapter, although such intrinsic issues are acknowledged, the focus of this research remained in line with the criteria as set out in SE's generic *Clubmark* framework, which do not directly assess the risks that might be inherent in sports such as rugby union. The RFU satisfied SE's criteria, enabling the NGB to gain the licence to award *Clubmark*. While the broader aspects of safeguarding are acknowledged this research was carried out with a focus on the definition of safeguarding adopted by SE.

The RFU, like all NGBs, placed the utmost importance on intrinsic and extrinsic issues of safeguarding. The RFU have recently introduced a new policy ("Headcase") and guidance to deal with the intrinsic issue of concussion¹¹⁶. For extrinsic issues there was a

¹¹⁵ See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/rugby-union/31431186> (Accessed 04.06.17)

¹¹⁶ <http://www.englandrugby.com/my-rugby/players/player-health/concussion-headcase/> (04.06.17)

comprehensive safeguarding section on the RFU website¹¹⁷ that provided clubs with all the information they could require. The safeguarding officer for STRC had used a number of the available documents:

I had to start by looking at the RFU Safeguarding Policy, the Safeguarding Toolkit and all of their guidance from the website, and building up relations. Also, when I did the *In Touch* safeguarding course that flagged up a few areas for me to work on. (Interviewee RBC, 02.04.15)

The importance of safeguarding was reiterated in the *Foreword* of the 2014 *RFU Safeguarding Policy: Guidance and Procedures* document it stated:

[T]he RFU believes that for the game to thrive we must look after the children and young people who play rugby. Their welfare and wellbeing is fundamental...We have a duty to ensure that safeguarding children is prioritised and that each child's rugby experience is as good as we can possibly make it. (Rugby Football Union, 2014a, p. 2)

The RFU viewed safeguarding as a proactive concept meaning that not only should people protect children and young people from abuse and neglect but go further to ensure they have the environment to foster appropriate development and to maximise life opportunities (Rugby Football Union, 2014a, p. 2). The RFU's most recent policy statement was based on the following key principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All participants regardless of age, gender, ability or disability, race, faith, size, language or sexual identity, have the right to protection from harm
- All allegations, suspicions of harm and concerns will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly and appropriately
- Everyone will work in partnership to promote the welfare, health and development of children Effective (Rugby Football Union, 2014a, p. 4)

To add stature to the policy statement the RFU included two key principles from a Government document that underpinned the effective safeguarding arrangements in every local area, which were:

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children. (HM Government, 2013)

¹¹⁷ <http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/safeguarding/> (Accessed 16.09.16)

The *RFU Safeguarding Policy* contained sections that included: the policy statement; children; the core values of Rugby Union in England; putting this policy into practice; working together - roles and responsibilities; a best practice guide; how to react to concerns about the welfare and safety of children; and, how the RFU will respond to suspicions or concerns.

The RFU also stated in the 2014 *RFU Safeguarding Policy* that, ‘the onus is on everyone who has contact with children and young people to protect them from harm as well as to create a positive environment in which to participate. ...The RFU provides support for clubs, assisting them in making safer recruitment decisions for those involved with young people, systems for dealing with allegations or concerns and training programmes for all working with young players, as well as effective systems for working with other relevant agencies’ (Rugby Football Union, 2014a, p.2). The support the RFU provided was through the RDOs but there were three individuals who formed the safeguarding team. The three individuals did nothing other than to focus on safeguarding dealing with DBS enquiries, incidents that occurred in clubs and the team also worked closely with the CPSU (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14).

8.9.1 SoA safeguarding

Within Mini and Youth *SoA*, criteria 7.1 to 7.15 (Member Welfare section) contained all the safeguarding requirements including the RFU Equity policy that needed to be adopted, various course and workshop to be attended, having a welfare officer, implementing numerous RFU policies and ensuring CRB (now DBS) checks were carried out. In fact, the wording was very prescriptive. For example, criteria 7.15 stated, “have all adults who have regular supervisory contact with young people undertake CRB and/or ISA [Independent Safeguarding Authority] (from Oct 09) disclosure as appropriate”. Satisfying this point was problematic for many clubs across the country due to the (then) process and the volume of adults who had to be checked as a requirement. One member from TRC recounted the experience at his club:

I mean, well one of the biggest ones they had to sort out was the child protection policy, which was part of the *Seal of Approval*. So, we had to have a child protection policy, which was in line with the forms that we had to fill in which came from the police. We had to send those, we had to have like a proper register...obviously you’d give the form out, somebody would fill it in, what documentation they had to bring in to obviously prove that the information they were giving was correct and then we would have to send all that off, a lot of the time it was sending people’s personal documents off. (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

As the quote demonstrates, the CRB process was not straightforward and many were unhappy with the length of time they would be without their passport. This slowed the implementation process for TRC due to the resistance. During this stage the implementation would have been located in Matland's (1995) *political* implementation quadrant as the members had clearly defined goals (instruction to send off passport, for example), but dissension occurred because these clearly defined goals were incompatible with personal preferences and concerns (p.163). Since the government updated the CRB process to the DBS clubs found it much more manageable, "once I got my head around the online DBS system it's dead easy to use." (Interviewee RBC, 02.04.15)

Although TRC experienced a few issues, one club member described benefits of the process:

[N]ow we can go into schools or I can go into schools and so can some of our coaches and actually do sessions at schools. So, it's given us a good platform for getting into especially infants and junior schools so for the mini section. There's a lot of schools approach us now because we've got the *Seal of Approval*. (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

8.9.2 CA safeguarding

The CA framework was designed so that it had no mention of safeguarding due to the fact a number of clubs affiliated to the RFU were adult-only clubs. Many adult-only clubs were unable to achieve *SoA/Clubmark* because of the irrelevant child safeguarding criteria that needed to be satisfied. What CA did have was additional bolt-ons for clubs with children and clubs with women and girls. The CA Additional Mini and Youth Statements (see Appendix G) had six criteria that a club with children completed:

- Has an RFU trained Safeguarding Officer who follows RFU CRB requirements and ensures the club has a safeguarding policy
- Provides an appropriate number of coaches and volunteers who have undertaken safeguarding training in line with RFU recommendations and size of the club
- Manages an up to date record of parent/carer contact details
- Provides coaches / managers with relevant up to date medical information of all players
- Meets the needs of parents/carers by providing regular and appropriate communication utilising modern methods of communication
- Operates a pricing policy that allows all members who wish to play with an opportunity to do so, ensuring families are catered for appropriately

The wording from the CA safeguarding section above is far less prescriptive than the SoA (the Member Welfare section). The RFU have used terms in CA such as 'in line with' and 'appropriate', rather stating explicit instruction. This reveals the greater degree of flexibility that the RFU officials adopted with their implementation strategy for CA. The RFU were aware that with this slightly ambiguous wording they would receive requests for clarification. So, they circulated a FAQ document to the RDOs. Here is one of the questions and answers from the document:

Q. What is considered as 'appropriate', where this is mentioned?

A. Each regional, functional lead should give guidance on this. If a club is doing all it can to satisfy the statement, i.e. putting all coaches on Rugby Ready, Scrum Factory and CPD courses to work towards new level two, then we should recognise this, and sign this statement off. (RDO CA FAQ document)

Similarly, it was no longer a requirement that *all* adults were DBS checked, as SoA specified. The message from the RFU was that those who worked with the children and 'anyone who has sustained meaningful contact' (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13) would be required to have a DBS check. Again, the reason was to keep the process as lightweight as possible. One RFU officer provided some examples to illustrate the policy in practice:

If the parent drives twice a season why would you CRB check the parent? The barman has no regular meaningful contact with kids other than serving them an orange juice; he doesn't need to be CRB checked. But the coach who is working with them every week for 30 weeks of the year, of course he needs to be CRB checked...Then, I remember one of the directors that came out to one of my referee societies was saying, "anybody who refereed a match in which there were kids under 18 had to be CRB checked." That's absolute nonsense. That's not meaningful sustained contact. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

The quote reveals how the RFU have developed knowledge over time. The SoA safeguarding policy was much more rigid and applied to those with minimal and occasional contact with children. The negative feedback drew attention to the implementation difficulties this causes. As a result, the RFU adopted a flexible strategy (i.e. 'regular meaningful contact') for the implementation of the safeguarding policy.

Another requirement of the CA safeguarding add-on is that a club has at least one 'RFU trained Safeguarding Officer'. It stated on the RFU website that to, 'ensure the highest level of safeguarding in English rugby, and to support its numerous volunteers, the RFU offers

two safeguarding courses which can be run at clubs across the country'¹¹⁸. These courses were:

- *Play It Safe*, which was designed for any volunteer or coach at a club who is working with or has responsibility for children and vulnerable adults within rugby. The course was three hours in length and could be run in the evenings, or at weekends, at any club. A club would organise the course with the CB Safeguarding Manager or the RDO. The course cost was £15 per delegate and on completion each delegate's RFU record was updated to show the accreditation.
- *In Touch* could be attended by any club officials, but it was specifically designed for club safeguarding officers. The workshop was four hours long and can be run as a single workshop or as a pair of two-hour workshops in the evening or at the weekend. The workshop could be organised through the CB Safeguarding Manager or the RDO and was free to club safeguarding officers. On completion of the workshop each delegate's RFU record was updated to show the accreditation.

There are a number of important points with regard to the courses/workshops that affected implementation. Firstly, the swimming case study highlighted difficulties that many club members faced in attending courses that were requirements of *swim21/Clubmark*. The RFU, not the CPSU, delivered their own safeguarding courses in suitable locations (rugby clubs) and at flexible times. Secondly, offering the *In Touch* course as a free workshop for safeguarding officers was a shrewd use of a remunerative mechanism (Etzioni, 1961) to gain implementation compliance.

Although safeguarding courses were relatively easy to attend STRC admitted that their safeguarding was 'weak for two years' (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15). The problem that the club had was explained by one of the members:

The old welfare officer stepped down as their son stopped playing so we had someone step in to cover who didn't have as much knowledge and wasn't around that often. But now we have [Interviewee RBC] who is very good – she works in a hostel for childcare. (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15)

The comment above corresponds with Matland's (1995) *experimental* implementation; there was low conflict but outcomes are heavily dependent on the individuals at the point of delivery. As identified in the previous case studies, matching committee positions

¹¹⁸ <http://www.englandrugby.com/governance/safeguarding/safeguarding-course-search#> (Accessed 16.09.16)

increased the chances of implementation success. Securing a volunteer who works in a children's home, as the welfare officer, was a sensible choice for STRC.

The committee members of STRC were aware of how various individuals (Lipsky's street-level bureaucrats, 1980) can affect implementation of policy so were planning to overhaul the committee, as this member explained:

There's no point having someone sitting there with a title and not do anything! We'll just get someone else! This year we are going to have four committee members stand down because if they can't do things, they may as well not be there and we have four people who are more keen to get on to replace them at next month's AGM. (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15)

Further evidence of the importance of the street-level club members for implementation is highlighted in the following quote:

I work in a children's home. I have done for 10 years so I know quite a lot about safeguarding and procedures....In my job you fail at safeguarding, you fail at everything, even if you have everything else in place, so I know the importance...At this club...I've had to redo everything from the start. (Interviewee RBC, 02.04.15)

STRC's new safeguarding officer made the comment above. With the knowledge she possessed, combined with her enthusiasm, the safeguarding practices within the club were drastically improved. In fact, the club went well beyond the 'appropriate' requirements of CA by implementing an number of their own policies:

Our [transport] policy is that we don't transport kids. Unless it's a bus to a special event. We say parents have to take their kids and they are responsible for their children – not to just drop them off in the car park and drive off. We expect parents to be here in case anything goes wrong. (Interviewee RBC, 02.04.15) RE

The quote is just one example of how individuals at the microimplementation level can interpret policy differently. In this case, it was not that club members were only attempting to satisfy minimal requirements. The safeguarding officer also developed a media policy:

Our media policy is about who can take pictures, when pictures can be taken, what we can share on our Facebook page, our website, what we can display in the club. It's quite difficult to monitor but I was given some ideas at the *In Touch* course...The biggest thing is stopping people taking pictures on their mobile phones. When people fill in their membership form that's where they give permission for their pictures of their kids can be used. So, it's just keeping an eye out for anyone who said 'no', keeping them out of the photos. (Interviewee RBC, 02.04.15)

The RFU appeared to be effectively communicating and specifying tasks that were required for the implementation of CA (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984) as this comment highlights, “the RFU safeguarding officer will email me reminding me that certain people need to attend courses and when any new initiatives come out, such as, ‘*Headcase*’ training¹¹⁹” (Interviewee RBC, 02.04.15).

A final point, in relation to the implementation of safeguarding policies, is that the RFU adopted flexibility with the CA safeguarding add-on as this club official explained:

I had to [attend *In Touch*] as safeguarding officer within six-months. But I think I was a little bit over six-months and they said I didn’t have to go on the basic ‘Play it Safe’ course because I’m already safeguard qualified through work as well as being a lead professional at work and I’m also involved with Scouts. (Interviewee RBC, 02.04.15)

Clearly, the RFU acknowledged that the safeguarding officer’s qualifications gained through her full time occupation was enough to satisfy the CA requirements, which was sensible for implementation success. The swimming case study also illustrated how the ASA had begun to adopt a similar strategy. Both NGBs learned, over time, that forcing club members through sport safeguarding courses when already qualified through their occupations resulted in resistance and caused conflict.

8.10 Increasing membership and participation

As with the NGBs from the two previous case studies, SE agreed participation targets with the RFU, which were then included in the RFU’s WSP. One senior RFU official explained the process:

Sport England fund us around 21, 22 million pounds over four years and it’s in exchange for producing some participation figures...and if we don’t achieve the participation figures, then half way through the four years they’ll audit it, and if it doesn’t look like we’re going to make it then we have a discussion about the funding for the remaining two years. And certainly it would impact on the funding round in four years time so for sure we’re accountable. That accountability is very keenly felt. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

The participation figures that the RFU official mentioned were the APS results. The APS figures for rugby are indicated in Table 8.2.

¹¹⁹ Education about concussion injuries

Table 8.2 Once a week rugby union participation (1x30 minutes) aged 16+

APS publication	Number of rugby participants
APS1 (Oct 2005-Oct 2006)	185,600
APS2 (Oct 2007-Oct 2008)	230,300
APS3 (Oct 2008-Oct 2009)	207,500
APS4 (Oct 2009-Oct 2010)	194,200
APS5 (Oct 2010 - Oct 2011)	178,900
APS6 (Oct 2011 - Oct 2012)	183,000
APS7 (Oct 2012 - Oct 2013)	159,900
APS8 (Oct 2013 - Oct 2014)	178,800
APS8 Q3 - APS9 Q2 (Apr 2014 - Mar 2015)	173,900
APS9 (Oct 2014 - Sep 2015)	191,900

Source: Adapted from information on the SE website¹²⁰

The participation figures in the table are characterised as fluctuating, however, the most recent APS results indicate a possible growth trend. RFU officials suggested that the APS data would “only tell you certain things at certain times” (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14) so the NGB had taken measures in an attempt to help explain its own declines or increases in participation as this official explained:

Now we track things like the games played every week and I can tell you that when we get the figures in for last weekend, there’ll probably be, I predict 30-35% of games didn’t happen. But I can tell you why. It’s because most pitches in the country were flooded. What have I done to try and mitigate it? I’ve tried to make sure that all our guys out in the field [RDOs] have conversations with clubs who are cancelling games to say, “is there any other alternative? There are artificial pitches around that we can use. Are there any pitches that are playing on higher ground?” But that’s all we can do really. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The methods the RFU adopted in an effort to track the games played and improve their participation knowledge involved requesting that clubs submitted their results directly to the RFU on a weekly basis, which was introduced in September 2013. Once the results were received the RFU officials increased their attention on those games that do not get reported:

At the moment we probably get about a 75% response rate and we can’t just equate that up to 100%. The 25% that you’re not getting, you might be not getting them because

¹²⁰ <https://www.sportengland.org/research/who-plays-sport/by-sport/> (Accessed 14.06.16)

they've not played or you might be not getting them because somebody's just not phoning them in. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The reason the RFU placed importance on the game data (in addition to satisfying APS targets) was due to the fact that rugby is a team sport where a certain number of teams need to be fielded each week. However, one senior RFU official explained that managing the membership of clubs was a complex issue. When asked if the RFU actively worked to increase rugby participation figures by supporting a club to increase its membership, his response was as follows:

Yeah, I mean, if it's right for the club. But you have to remember rugby's a team game so you need 15 people. So, in reality you need 20 people, so in the modern day world you probably need 25+ people in order that you can fill the team every week. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The comment demonstrated the flexibility in the RFU's participation strategy since clubs were not forced to increase membership numbers. The RFU official continued to explain the complicated membership recruitment issue:

So, if I'm at 55 [members] in my club and I'm running two teams, we probably don't want to recruit too many more players because all that happens is we pee off players that are already in the club as they can't get a game...So, we need enough to keep the churn going but we've either got to say we're going to recruit another 20 players and hence we can start a third team or we're actually not going to bother because if we recruit another five or six, all that might happen is that five or six guys that are currently in the club no longer get a game so it's quite a hard. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The comment reiterated the difficult issue of striking a balance between a clubs having too many, or not enough players. It also revealed that the RFU were aware of how the variation in club contexts affected the implementation of increasing participation and/or membership strategies. Therefore, for the RFU, the policy could be characterised as being *experimental* implementation (Matland, 1995). A further layer of complexity was added when the ages of players and the preferred playing positions of the players was considered when recruiting. It was the RDO's responsibility to have discussions with the clubs to guide them and help to identify where the gaps in the teams may exist. With the variation in club context the RFU attempted to control certain aspects to improve the overall management of its club members.

Effective and efficient facilities is one of our key drivers [for CA. See Figure 8.5]. So, what are we doing there? We're trying to help clubs with things like drainage. We know that if we can get better drainage on our lot of our pitches, then they're going to drain quicker,

which is going to mean they're going to be playable quicker, which means we're going to get games played. So, we'd invest quite heavily in that area but it takes times when you've got a lot of clubs. But again, on the *Club Accreditation* thing, that's what we want clubs to identify. So, the things on the *Club Accreditation* should be more about what the club needs rather than what the club wants...So, drainage would be a good one, it doesn't matter how good your showers are quite frankly, if your pitch doesn't drain then you're stuffed really. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The comment highlights how the simplified CA framework was designed to get club members to embrace smarter management of their club that would hopefully lead to greater sustainability, increased membership and fewer cancelled games, which would help improve the RFU's participation figures.

As a way of improving the club data capture the RFU were developing an online system to replace *RugbyFirst*. One member of STRC had heard that a new system was to be introduced, "[t]here's an online system that is being rolled out this year. When we first started checking our information it had the old secretary's name pretty much next to every single job role just because he was the one who had access to it and just to tick the box to make sure we had it! (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15). This comment is a clear demonstration of how policy at the local-level can be interpreted by street-level bureaucrats, highlighting the importance of the RFU of gaining 'perfect' compliance from club members, where possible. It was this type of box-ticking approach that the RFU wanted to eliminate, as it did not help a club to develop, and it was also the reason clubs were required to state only three Action Points with a CA submission. Furthermore, using an online platform is a form of management system, which was a recommendation Hogwood and Gunn (1984) proposed to improve the success of policy implementation; the introduction of the online *swim21* portal was indeed a successful management system as highlighted in the swimming case study.

RugbyFirst was the RFU's initial data capture system but one RFU official bluntly remarked that, "it's crap and we're busy trying to fix that!" (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13). When developing the new system the RFU official once again demonstrated how the organisation were conscious of the potential impact the change could have on the club members, "again, it's trying to do that in a way that we don't over burden our volunteers" (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13).

The RFU possessed information in relation to many registered rugby players there were playing in the leagues, and how many children (this was a mandatory requirement for clubs). However, there was a large population of players for whom the RFU possessed no information and were attempting to develop mechanisms to capture that data. The solution was the launch of Game Management System (GMS), which was the online system the STRC member referred to in his comment. The system was designed 'to make club and player administration easier'¹²¹ and replaced *RugbyFirst*. The RFU website provided a video and user guides to help club members use the new system. One member of STRC liked the new system, "It's very good but until a couple of weeks ago (when I rang up the RFU asking for some guidance notes) I had no idea how to use it." (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15). The club offered no resistance with the implementation of the GMS but explained the slight irritation experienced, "the RFU used to use *RugbyFirst* and that had all the memberships online. We'd just got all that in, it was going nicely and they go and change it all with a new system! I got no information on how to use the new bloody system!" (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15). Although there was an initial grumble from the club member he heaped praise on the system. In a similar way that the *swim21* portal, there was restricted access to certain committee members, GMS only allowed access to certain areas dependent on the committee role. (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15). One member from STRC also felt that the GMS would be a good thing for their club. He said, "I've been saying for years we need to tighten up our membership so we know who we have – we've got people on there who have now passed away!" (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15)

Another data capture mechanism implemented by the RFU was a national club census. The RFU asked every club in the land to complete a simple matrix to provide a broad measurement of the composition of its membership. A senior RFU official explained that they managed to receive a high response rate, "we got 82% response rate last year, which just helps us to get a picture of the amount of rugby that is or isn't being played." (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

Although the GMS was introduced, the RFU had not implemented an electronic game results system since the RFU were aware of the ageing demographic and the level of technological ability of a core of its members, as this official explained, "We have a lot of aged administrators who aren't very IT literate" (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14). The RFU official's comment indicated that he/the RFU were aware that if too much was expected too soon (at the point of delivery), then implementation would likely fail. It was seen in the

¹²¹ <http://www.englandrugby.com/news/features/game-management-system-faq/> (Accessed 04.09.16)

swimming case study that the ASA were also aware of the age and lack of technological knowledge of many volunteers and offered transition periods.

The analysis revealed it was not only the RFU driving to increase membership figures and improve data capture techniques, the two clubs in this case study were making an effort. One member from STRC stated, “our improvement hasn’t been to do with *Clubmark*, just me driving it – it wasn’t good enough! I want to get more accurate figures because the RFU asked a few years ago about teenage drop-off and we couldn’t provide them with anything” (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15).

TRC were struggling with fielding junior and senior teams each week and acknowledged it was due to natural drop-off. One committee member explained how they attempted to recruit new members:

To try and bring more players in, we generally go in at the beginning of a season, so September time, and go in and do taster sessions after school, normally. But sometimes we do have a couple of lads who are doing things through their university studies and they will go in and represent the club as well as helping them towards university degrees so my son’s done it and we’ve got a couple of other lads a bit younger who are doing that at the moment. (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

The committee member stated that the recruiting was purely for the club’s benefit, rather than that of the RFU. He continued to explain the club’s approach:

I would say it’s purely for our benefit. At the beginning of the season we look at where we’re lacking or what ages we’re lacking and we’ll target those ages, but it’s purely to get the membership up at the club...It’s not something we’re forced to by the RFU (Interviewee RAA, 28.11.13)

Therefore, the annual active recruitment drive for increasing membership (and, as a consequence, participation) indicates that it could be categorised as *administrative* implementation given the fact that there was low ambiguity of goals and means and low conflict (Matland, 1995). Similarly, STRC were active in their comparable recruitment strategies, as this committee member described:

We have advertising drives, we visit schools, exhibitions, we try and invite schools to have competitions down here – often ‘Tag’ to get them to play with the ball. But there’s so many sports for them to choose, it’s always a battle...It’s a battle to keep the numbers up to put out the teams, that’s all the way from minis to seniors. (Interviewee RBA, 02.04.15)

One of the primary reasons STRC struggled with membership numbers and retaining players was due to the geographical location, and players leaving to start university, which was a common issue across the country. This latter point was something that boxing clubs did not have an issue with, which once again highlights how contextual differences are influential in the process of implementation. One STRC member explained the club's issues:

We still struggle to get two teams out...Because we have such a small catchment area, surrounded by big city teams you tend to lose them as soon as they get to 18, 19, 20. Over the last three seasons we've probably lost between 15 - 18 players to [the big local clubs]....Last year [a bigger local club] took lots of our players - our coach we had was very weak in fighting our corner. We reported this to the RFU but nothing was done. The same happened this year but the RFU have been down, there's been more open discussion between the two clubs and the RFU has supported us financially to help us be more attractive to retain our players. (Interviewee RBB, 02.04.15)

This point is a demonstration of some of the difficulties that a small club faced. Unfortunately, STRC will never be able to improve issues that the result of the club's geographical location but the comment indicated how the RFU improved the club support and communication.

One senior RFU official explained how he had worked on strategies in an attempt to develop the game and grow our participation. He was aware how the varying contexts across the country impacted implementation:

It's an impossible task...you deliver all this activity in the inner city where there's no outlet for people...So, it's got to be from the rugby club out, the rugby club reaching out and pulling people back to a really strong vibrant organisation. The Rugby Development Officer's job is to support the club in that endeavour...they're used to working with local authorities, they're used to working with schools, they're used to doing this and we now want them to do that so it's giving them reasons to go do that and *Club Accreditation* is a perfect reason to go and do that. (Interviewee RB, 11.12.13)

The comment highlights another recognition by the RFU of the important role that the street-level bureaucrats play in implementation; developing the game would be impossible without the compliance of the club members. It also indicates another effort to bring club members and the RFU (through RDOs) closer together with face-to-face meetings. As established throughout this chapter (and the previous two), this interaction

improved relations, and assisted to ensure communication was clear between the two groups and tasks were specified and coordinated in the correct sequence (Hogwood & Gunn, 1984).

Another responsibility of the RDOs was to understand why certain clubs persistently gave away walkover points.¹²² If it was something that regularly occurred the RDO would look to see if something could be done about it, as this senior official explained:

It's all driven trying to help the club survive, because if that club doesn't get that game, the impact of that is 30 odd guys don't go in the bar after the game, not that they drink as heavily as they used to but even if it's 1 or 2 pints you know, that's 50 or 60 pints that haven't gone behind that bar which ultimately means that club's revenue is down which just has a knock on. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

Therefore, through CA the RFU were working hard to ensure clubs understood the implications of not being able to field teams and make them sustainable clubs by implementing membership growth strategies. The analysis indicated that fielding teams was a nation-wide problem for rugby clubs so there was little resistance with following the RDO's strategic advice.

The final point in relation to attempting to increase membership was unique to this case study. The majority of RFU affiliated club were either asset owning or asset leasing clubs. This resulted in both positive and negative outcomes for clubs, as this senior RFU official explained:

Now that has a real advantage because it's our greatest asset as a sport but it's also our greatest challenge because if you've got a crumbling clubhouse and you've got all the grounds to maintain, as a group of volunteers where do you put your efforts? Do you put them on repainting and pointing the club and cutting the grass rather than going out into the local community to try and find players? (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

So, now that the RDOs were able to spend more time in the clubs (rather than working through the lengthy *SoA* process with struggling clubs), they could help the members make the best decisions to ensure club sustainability. Furthermore, CA attempted to harness the *effective and efficient facilities* key driver as it was now applicable to all clubs. As an example:

A club who hires a local authority pitch and operates out of a pub because what they might tell us in their accreditation is they have real problems in December and January because

¹²² If a team pulls out of a league fixture the opposition are awarded points

the local authority don't maintain the pitch so they end up having to cancel the games when the weather's bad. So, one of their accreditation things might be how are we going to build a better relationship with the local authority to persuade the local authority that we're really important and that they do look after the pitch? (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The RFU developed their knowledge over time and were clearly focused on improving the sustainability of its clubs. Once clubs become more stable, develop relationships with LA and are then able to consistently field teams, it would improve the RFU's participation figures that are measured by the WSP. Due to the team sport environment there was no evidence of major conflict with implementation of membership/participation strategies.

8.11 Managing implementation

Figure 8.6 provides an overview of the three policy strands from the point in time that the RFU first introduced *Clubmark (SoA)*, in 2002, to the end of 2015. *CA* was introduced in 2012. Safeguarding policies were a requirement of *Clubmark* and an outcome was that membership should increase. The three policy strands will now be discussed in greater detail.

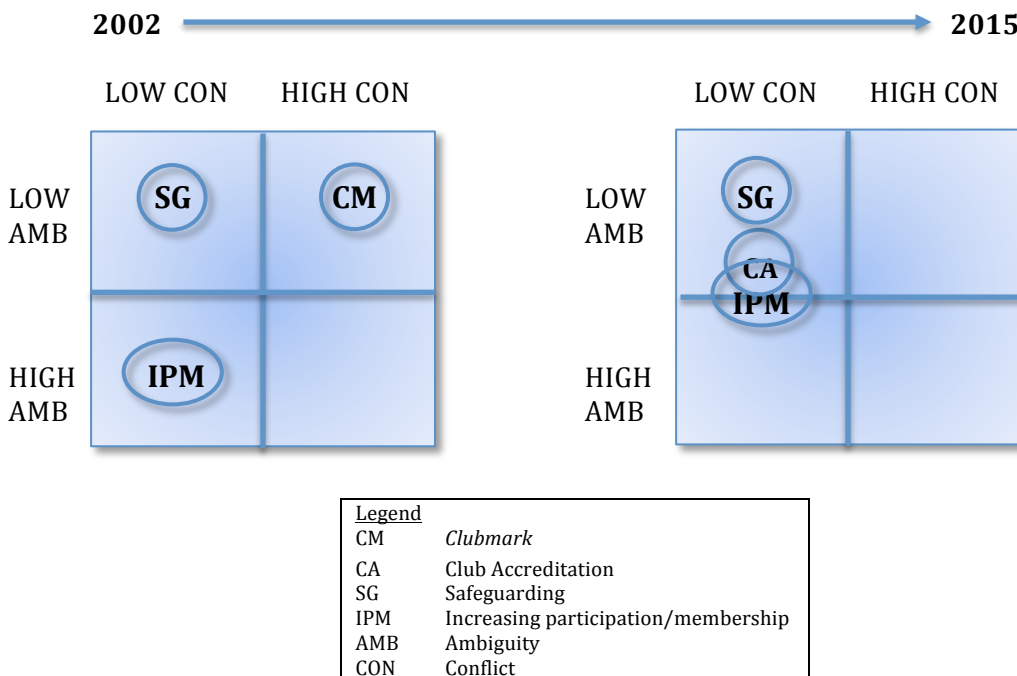


Figure 8.6 Implementation ambiguity and conflict levels over time for rugby

8.11.1 Safeguarding

Since 2002 the implementation of this policy has been most closely aligned with the top-down ideal type model, and it has continued to follow the model into 2015. Data suggested that the safeguarding policy was initially located in the *administrative* implementation paradigm, and has not moved from its position over time. Policies within this paradigm are inherently low in conflict and low in ambiguity meaning the desired outcome is virtually assured, given that sufficient resources are assumed for the programme (Matland, 1995, p. 160).

In the case of safeguarding in rugby, with the policy located in the *administrative* implementation quadrant, normative mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961; Matland, 1995) brought about compliance; both rugby clubs and the RFU treated safeguarding compliance as a priority. The RFU were all too familiar with the sexual abuse scandals that troubled sport during the 1990s so wanted to ensure their clubs operated within a safe environment for its members. Should a club fail to comply with safeguarding practices, the potential – and likely – hostile environment, and potential collapse of the club, was a large enough deterrent to ensure clubs were committed to the implementation of RFU safeguarding policies and procedures. Both STRC and TRC had no issue in following the safeguarding guidance produced by the RFU. Every individual who came into contact with children held DBS certificates and the role of the safeguarding officer was taken seriously in both clubs.

8.11.2 Seal of Approval and Club Accreditation

When *Clubmark* (mini and youth *SoA*) was first introduced in 2002 the framework was located in the *political implementation* paradigm on the account that compliance was not automatically forthcoming. There were clearly defined goals set out by the RFU (low policy ambiguity) yet club members perceived *SoA* as additional bureaucratic paperwork from the NGB and failed to comprehend the potential benefits it could bring to a club. Furthermore, many rugby clubs across England did not have mini or youth sections so elements of the accreditation were not relevant (incompatible goals).

Implementation of *SoA* moved around Matland's (1995) implementation quadrants since its 2002 introduction. For example, when the RFU updated *Clubmark* in 2009 with their Whole Club *SoA*, implementation of this policy moved towards *experimental* implementation. This was due to the new *SoA* being more relevant to a greater number of clubs, yet contextual conditions of clubs continued to dominate. However, once club

members realised the volume of work that was required to satisfy the criteria conflict increased further and the policy moved back towards the top right of the matrix into *political* implementation. In efforts to gain improved acceptance of *SoA* from certain clubs, the RFU utilised remunerative mechanisms (Etzioni, 1961) by offering incentives, such as course discounts and cash bonuses on completion of successful implementation, to make compliance more appealing.

Once the RFU overhauled the accreditation process by creating their own simplified framework, termed *CA*, many more clubs subscribed to implementation of the accreditation. The RFU received far less negative feedback and resistance due to the fact it was far less onerous to complete. Furthermore, the accreditation was designed so that *CA* was relevant to every club, no matter the geographical location or the composition of the club. The result was that, over time, the policy moved towards *administrative* implementation (Matland, 1995).

8.11.3 Membership and participation

In 2002 (and during the subsequent decade) increasing membership and participation was categorised as *experimental implementation* due to the fact that outcomes were dependent on the level of club volunteer involvement, and contextual conditions dominated the process. Outcomes were heavily dependent on the resources and individuals present at the local level. Matland (1995) suggested that 'participants' level of activity in a choice situation depends on the intensity of their feelings, [and] the number of other demands on their time' (p.166). On account of achieving *SoA* being such an arduous, lengthy process, many clubs did not have the time, resources or capacity to implement (or know how to enact) membership strategies.

Since the introduction of *CA*, in 2012, increasing membership and participation was categorised as (predominantly) *administrative implementation* due to the fact that there was low conflict and low ambiguity of the policy strand. The simplified *CA* process enabled club volunteers to spend more time on strategies aiming to increase their membership, and RDOs had more time to visit a greater number of clubs to discuss such strategies. However, outcomes were dependent on the level of club volunteer involvement, and contextual conditions continued to dominate the process so elements of the policy strand could also be characterised as *experimental* implementation.

8.12 Conclusion

This case study analysed the implementation of *Clubmark (SoA)* and *CA*, which highlighted three different issues evident with the implementation process. The RFU consisted of a substantial RDOs support structure (and additional support from CRCs) that enabled the NGB to offer clubs much needed capacity and guidance to enable improved implementation success, once the overarching policy (*SoA/CA*) had been simplified and redesigned to become a manageable process for a greater number of clubs.

8.12.1 *Clubmark / SoA / CA*

The two *SoA* frameworks were complex, multi-faceted policies of moderate to high importance to both rugby clubs and the RFU. Conversely, *CA* was a clear, simple policy and was of slightly higher importance (in comparison to *SoA*) for both rugby clubs and important to the RFU.

The RFU developed knowledge over time. The RFU experienced levels of implementation failure as a result of overburdening their volunteer club members when attempting to create a comprehensive quality mark framework in *SoA*. However, the RFU were relatively quick to act on the negative club feedback, which indicated a willingness to be extremely flexible with the implementation strategy (particularly since the RFU moved away from SE's *Clubmark* to create their own 'quality mark', which later became *Clubmark* recognised). Consequences of the *SoA* policy's complexity resulted in one major update, followed by the total overhaul and development of a new policy, which was primarily driven by negative feedback and resistance (plus lack of capacity) at club level. With the introduction of *CA* it was recognition by the RFU of the importance they felt club members played in the process of implementation.

This case study highlights that significance of the combination of a sensitive top-down management approach in implementation, coupled with bottom-up adaptation. The empirical evidence demonstrated the abundant frustration from club members (of the arduous *SoA* accreditation process), which was fed back to the RFU through various channels. The discarding of *SoA* and creation of *CA* clearly demonstrated that the RFU were not rigid in their implementation strategy. The RFU negotiated with SE during the design of the new accreditation, which was not based on *Clubmark*, to enable clubs who had satisfied *CA* standards to automatically also achieve *Clubmark* status.

8.12.2 Safeguarding

The RFU safeguarding policies were narrowly focused policies and seen to be very important to both of the rugby clubs and the RFU. Although safeguarding was of great importance for clubs and the NGB there was still a degree of flexibility offered with implementation due to local conditions. Examples of this flexibility offered by the RFU included the ability of safeguarding officers not to attend the *Play It Safe* course and not required to have further DBS checks if they were appropriately qualified in their full-time professions.

8.12.3 Membership and participation

Increasing membership and participation was narrowly focused and fairly important to both swimming clubs and the RFU. For the reason that rugby is a team sport clubs needed to ensure they had enough members to field various teams each week. The RFU wanted to ensure its clubs were sustainable so had an interest in clubs being able to field teams (rather than awarding opposition teams walkover points if they failed to provide enough players to compete, which could potentially lead to relegation and an exodus of players), and due to the fact that club membership contributed towards the RFU's APS participation figures and WSP targets. Where possible, both clubs in this case study actively adopted strategies in attempts to attract new players (members).

8.12.4 Role of the RFU

In the early 2000s the RFU attempted to take a strong line on implementation of SoA but it was frequently met with club resistance due to elements of irrelevant criteria and a lengthy process. The RFU updated SoA in an attempt to make the accreditation more relevant to a greater number of clubs but it was still perceived as burdensome process.

Then, a change in senior RFU personnel in 2012 combined with constant negative club feedback contributed towards a significant positive change in the accreditation process. Having senior RFU officials who were members of VSCs themselves – which also included a sport outside of rugby (athletics) – played a significant role in policy development and, as a consequence, impacted positively on the success of policy implementation. The following quote neatly indicates how senior RFU officials were able to empathise with club members and recognise past mistakes:

We have a phrase in here, which is “simple is good” because we’re notoriously bad in development for overcomplicating stuff and wanting to write lots of strategies and everything else rather than just, well, most people in most clubs are pretty simple people and I don’t mean that in a derogatory way, I’m one of them! When I’m in the club I’m there because it’s my leisure time so I want to, I just want to chill and have a laugh. (Interviewee RA, 08.01.14)

The senior officials were able to clearly understand the pressures and issues that the club members at the point of policy delivery faced. Consequently, there was now minimal disconnect between the policy makers and the implementing actors. Furthermore, the RFU negotiated with SE to find a mutually acceptable accreditation, which also automatically rewarded clubs with *Clubmark* status.

8.12.5 Role of rugby clubs

During the period that *SoA* was the ‘quality mark’ that the RFU wanted clubs to implement (2002-2012) and adopt there was a clear pattern of resistance and a lack of acceptance by clubs. With the introduction of *CA* evidence suggested that not only did the RFU’s knowledge develop over time but club knowledge of the ‘quality mark’ has improved. The success of implementation was heavily dependent on the individuals within a club and the (volunteer) resources available. The major concern for many clubs across the country was recruiting and retaining (player) members. Ensuring safeguarding policies and procedures were up to date provided clubs with increased opportunities for recruitment (school visits, for example) so clubs often concentrated on these policy strands (where relevant to their club). Clubs across the country were more accepting of *CA*, due to the much more straightforward process, and offered far less resistance. The acceptance and compliance of clubs was pivotal for implementation success.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the research on community sport and, more specifically, develop understanding of the role of VSCs and NGBs in acting as the implementation agents for SE/government policy. The overarching research question was, 'What are the strategies the selected NGBs adopt for the implementation of Sport England's *Clubmark* framework (and associated policies), and how do VSCs interpret and implement these policies?'. This final chapter addresses the research objectives presented in Chapter 1, which were:

1. Review the public policy literature, with an emphasis on the implementation stage, to identify suitable analytical framework(s).
2. Identify and analyse the role(s) of the selected VSCs in the process of policy implementation in relation to three specific policies; and
3. Identify and analyse the role of the three selected NGBs in the process of policy implementation in relation to three specific policies.

9.2 The suitability of the selected analytical frameworks

9.2.1 Power

Lukes' (2005) concept of power was discussed in Chapter 3 and it has provided a useful lens to describe the relationships between the organisations (SE with NGBs, and NGBs with VSCs) and decision-making processes within the policy landscape. Examples of all three faces of power described by Lukes' (2005) have all been identified in the data but it was the first face of power – resource dependence – that was most in evidence. For the first face, which is the exercise of power by one actor over another. An example includes the resource dependency relationships between Sport England and NGBs in terms of the setting of funding conditions in the WSPs. Lukes' (2005) second face suggests that those in a position of power can control the issues to be discussed. Instances of this dimension were apparent in this sport context and mainly focussed on the lack of discussion of the

role (and arguably the marginalisation of members) in making strategic decisions regarding the development of their club. Lukes' (2005) third face of power is based on the less observable facets of power such as values and ideologies, which closely links with the political stream of Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams framework that concentrates on the influence of the public's mood and political preferences. For example, there appeared to be a general acceptance of the managerialist culture embodied within WSPs, and the use, initially at least, of KPIs.

9.2.2 Theoretical framework

Policy implementation is one component of the public policy process. Therefore, the analysis utilised a theoretical framework which applied implementation-specific analytical models, supported with Kingdon's (1997) Multiple Streams meso-level framework when appropriate.

9.2.2.1 Meso-level

The potential usefulness of various meso-level frameworks was considered in Chapter 3. The value of all frameworks was acknowledged but it was decided that the MS framework could possibly offer the greatest supporting context for analysis. While the MS framework (independently) was not of significant value for implementation analysis, within this sporting context, it was found to be useful organising data for analysis when employing the implementation-specific analytical frameworks. The reason for reviewing the meso-level frameworks was so that sight was not lost of the fact that implementation is not too distinct from the policy-making stage of the policy process. As the data revealed, for the safeguarding policy strand the distinction between policy-making and implementation was clear, however, for the other two strands (*Clubmark* in particular) the distinction was much more blurred due to the numerous updates and major changes to the frameworks.

9.2.2.2 Implementation analysis models

The top-down perspective, such as Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) conditions for 'perfect' implementation, was a useful starting point for a generally negotiated approach to policy-making and implementation (by both SE and NGBs). Furthermore, it became apparent that NGBs were very sensitive to the contexts within which VSCs operated and also sensitive to their (VSCs) semi-automatous status and accountability to their members. Lipsky's (1980) focus on what he termed 'street-level bureaucrats' provided a useful lens to complement

the analysis of implementation. Lipsky, like other bottom-up theorists (e.g. Berman, 1978; Hjern & Hull, 1982; Hjern & Porter, 1981; Hupe & Hill, 2007) argued that a greater understanding of implementation can be gained by focusing on the view of the service deliverers, such as, the VSC members. The analysis has determined the important role of the VSC members for implementation and how local-level interpretations can result in either success or failure. Skille (2009) advocates the use of both top-down and bottom-up approaches for implementation research. Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict model of policy proved to be crucial for implementation analysis. It enabled the tracing of policies over time, which revealed fluctuations between implementation typologies throughout the process. Figure 9.1 displays an overview of the three main policy strands, for the three sports, over time.

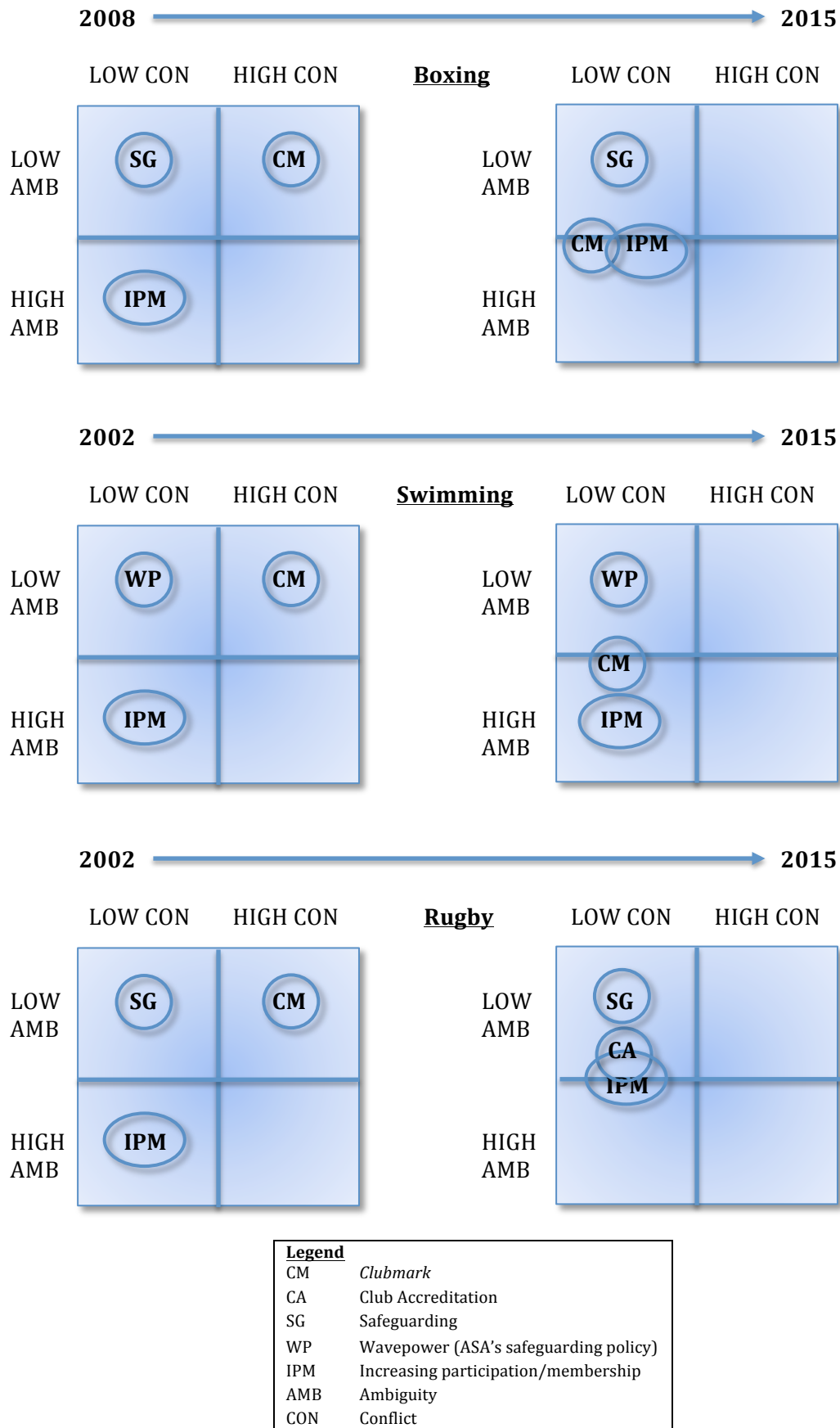


Figure 9.1 Overview of Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict levels, over time

The positioning of Matland's (1995) Ambiguity-Conflict matrices from the three case studies in Figure 9.1 provides a useful representation of how implementation of the three policy strands varied over time, and that variation across sports was also demonstrated. Analysis of the data established that when *Clubmark* (and the associated policy strands of safeguarding policies and increasing participation and/or membership) was initially introduced, the national picture of the three policy strands meant that they were all located in the corresponding implementation quadrants for each sport; the objectives of *Clubmark* were clear but the framework and process was predominantly perceived as an increase in unnecessary, bureaucratic NGB paperwork, which often resulted in conflict; due to the historical cases of sexual abuse in sport, clubs recognised that the implementation of safeguarding policies was important, so there was low conflict; and clubs (particularly team sport clubs, such as, rugby union) were interested in attracting new members, yet were unsure of the most appropriate strategies or how to implement any strategies.

Over time, the positioning of the *Clubmark* and participation/membership policies for each sport changed. For example, in the swimming case study, with the first major amendment of *swim21 (version two)*, a greater number of criteria were added to the framework, which resulted in the process becoming even more time-consuming for the club volunteers. Therefore, greater levels of conflict were experienced. At this point, the ASA recognised that the increased number of criteria (in addition to the lack of relevance for many clubs) was problematic so were working on strategies to improve implementation success, which, for the NGB, located *Clubmark* in *experimental* implementation. Then, as the ASA's implementation knowledge developed and the consequential simplification of the accreditation process, the high conflict levels were reduced as more actors became increasingly accepting of *swim21*. The overhaul of quality mark accreditation process by the RFU generated comparable movements of policy implementation positioning over time.

The final locations of the three policy strands (across the three case studies) at the end of 2015 demonstrate that, overall, there was less implementation conflict and ambiguity than when first introduced. Safeguarding remained the *administrative* quadrant as implementation continued to predominantly follow the top-down ideal; for *Clubmark* (or the NGB-specific tailored versions and the RFU's CA), with the increased NGB capacity support (creation of Club Development Teams), simplifications of accreditation processes, and development of club and NGB knowledge (which, helped create a mutually acceptable

framework of *swim21 club Essential (version five)*, for example), the policies, over time, have gradually moved towards *administrative* implementation. In regard to the participation/membership policy strands, implementation in rugby was closest to the top-down ideal (primarily due to the fact rugby is a team sport, so club members displayed an interest). Yet, there were still elements of ambiguity, particularly in relation to clubs' cognizance of the most effective strategies to increase membership. Data indicated that boxing club members were interested in developing club membership numbers (where capacity and facilities allowed) but swimming clubs were often constrained by the LA pool time allocation, hence the static positioning in that case study.

Furthermore, adopting a synthesised implementation analysis framework over a period of seven to thirteen years, such as Matland's (1995) model, to form part of the theoretical framework that guided this study, allowed for a demonstration that policy implementation is not a static process; ambiguity, conflict and other factors, which affect the implementation, occur at different moments in time. Consequently, this is supportive of Sabatier's (1986) argument that the four to six year time-frame, which was often used in the majority of early implementation research, 'misses many critical features' (p. 21) of the policy process.

Matland's (1995) model was useful as both a descriptive and analytical tool. As a descriptive tool the model was useful in tracing the implementation of policy over time. The two characteristics of ambiguity and conflict were valuable in identifying a key characteristic of policy (degree of ambiguity) and the relationship between implementing agents (conflict). The model was also a valuable analytical tool in aiding the explanation of how the implications of ambiguity were dealt with and what the consequences of conflict were for the process of policy implementation. However, a two-dimensional model is unlikely to capture the full complexity of the implementation process and, as this research has shown, there were other dimensions, most notably NGB and VSC capacity, which were significant.

9.2.3 Literature

This study has provided a contribution to sport policy analysis literature in a number of ways. The research has presented a detailed analysis of the implementation process across three distinct sports. The range of (VSC) contexts and variation in (VSC and NGB) capacity yielded subtle nuances and clear distinctions during the process of

implementation. Obtaining access to numerous high-level SE and NGB official and board members added significant value to the data. Furthermore, this study has provided longitudinal, multi-level data analysis starting with the policy-makers (SE and NGBs) through to the point of delivery (VSC members). One of the fundamental recommendations from the ISLP research, which focussed on one sport, was that a review of the time-consuming and bureaucratic nature of the *Clubmark* process was needed (Hodson & Robinson, 2007). This study has demonstrated how that, across three sports, the NGBs have modified (or drastically altered) their accreditation processes, over time through policy learning, to become less onerous for the volunteers. This study also reinforced and developed a greater understanding of a some of findings in the Nichols and Faulkner (2013) pilot study that examined the impact of gaining *Clubmark* accreditation on sports club volunteers in three (large) team-based sports. They suggested a benefit of *Clubmark* was increased funding opportunities for VSCs but the process was a bureaucratic burden of increased administration. This study offered perspectives from team and individual sports, and a smaller NGB. The analysis established that *Clubmark* status often provided VSCs with an increased chance of receiving funding but it was also seen how NGBs used this information as a coercive mechanism to gain greater implementation compliance. Furthermore, the findings of this study concurred with the mruk report (Cope et al., 2014) and has added depth to the evaluation by providing a more refined, nuanced analysis of the implementation process.

9.3 Identify and analyse the role of NGBs in the process of policy implementation

The evidence presented in this thesis has clearly demonstrated that NGBs were also fundamental in the process of policy implementation. The analysis revealed three key characteristics that proved to be significant factors in affecting NGBs in the process of implementation. The similarities and differences in relation to three main policy themes across the three sports will now be specified.

9.3.1 Flexibility

***Clubmark* (or equivalent)**

All NGBs in this research displayed flexibility in their strategies for implementation of *Clubmark* (or equivalent). The degree of flexibility varied between NGBs – some moderate, some introduced substantial changes to *Clubmark*. One important factor for implementation was that all sports originally had specific *Clubmark* accreditation targets in relation to the number of accredited clubs. Each NGB acknowledged that when the targets were included in their WSPs, implementation became ‘a numbers game’. The NGBs were attempting to coerce VSCs through the process, or dilute the rigor of the process, and as a result, there were tensions, conflict and resistance. Consequently, each NGB altered their implementation strategies by removing the targets from their most recent WSP.

Further flexibility was demonstrated by the ASA and the RFU. Since *swim21* was first introduced in 2002 there were five major revisions of the *Clubmark* framework. The alterations were primarily as a result of the continued negative feedback from the VSCs, which included comments about the lack of relevance and the onerous nature of the accreditation process. In 2013 *swim21* was simplified to contain only 21 elements, rather than 100 plus it had contained previously. The RFU also received a great deal of negative feedback especially on the grounds of a lack of relevance to many clubs. The RFU revised its original *SoA* by designing it so that adult-only VSCs could work towards the accreditation. However, the RFU continued to receive negative feedback due to the perceived arduous, time-consuming accreditation process. In an unprecedented move the RFU introduced a drastic change to its implementation strategy by creating a new simplified quality mark accreditation (*CA*) in 2012. This demonstrated the willingness of the NGB to be flexible in its approach to implementation and also the degree of flexibility on the part of SE and the recognition by the agency of the importance of getting these two major sports ‘on board’. The case studies of rugby and swimming also draw attention to the limitations of top-down, ‘command and control’ managerialism especially when dealing with VSCs whose primary line of accountability is towards its members.

Although EB did not make any drastic alterations to the generic SE framework, flexibility was identified. Not all VSCs were in a position to implement *Clubmark* so the CSOs would guide them through a number of the elements knowing that the VSC would never complete the accreditation. This demonstrates a sensitive top-down approach.

Safeguarding

Although this policy strand was a narrowly focused and an important policy for the NGBs, each NGB offered a degree of flexibility. For example, in swimming the VSC feedback made the ASA aware that attending courses was often difficult and slowed down the implementation process. Consequently, the ASA introduced grace periods for VSC members. Furthermore, if a VSC committee member had received a DBS certificate through their full-time occupation, then a DBS check was not required through the VSC *swim21* process, which was one of the mandatory elements. The RFU also offered a similar type of flexibility – if a welfare officer’s full-time occupation was associated with safeguarding and they had attended relevant courses, the welfare officer did not have to attend the compulsory safeguarding course. EB offered flexibility by offering safeguarding information and advice by adopting a supportive approach, rather than a dictatorial ‘wagging finger’ approach; each individual VSC context was taken into consideration, which highlighted the sensitivity of top-down management boxing to the constraints at grassroots level.

Participation/membership

Data revealed that none of the NGBs treated this policy strand as being high importance. If VSC members were interested in increasing membership, then the boxing and swimming NGBs would offer support and guidance but be led by the VSCs. The RFU perceived this policy strand, as moderate to high importance due to the fact rugby is a team sport, so were mindful of VSC membership numbers required to field teams. The RDOs would offer support and guidance for initiatives with the aim of increasing membership numbers. To a large extent the flexibility demonstrated by NGBs was, in part at least, due to recognition of the semi-autonomous nature of clubs and their complex pattern of accountability.

9.3.2 Capacity and support

Clubmark (or equivalent)

In 2013 EB and the ASA established CSOs and CDOs respectively. These new roles substantially improved the capacity and support that each NGB were able to provide. The NGBs now had the resources to visit VSCs face-to-face to offer *Clubmark* implementation guidance; perfect communication and allocation of tasks are perceived as important for implementation success. Although, the CSOs offered greater capacity for EB, the NGB continued to be stretched, which affected implementation (support). The solution EB opted for was to utilise the support of CSP officers around the country. In contrast, the

RFU and the ASA did not involve CSP officers; the RFU had over 50 RDOs to offer support and the ASA argued that CSP officers would not possess an acceptable level of *swim21* knowledge so did not allow them to be involved in the process. A technique that the ASA adopted to improve implementation success was to move the paper-based accreditation system to an online platform.

Picking up on the introduction of the RFU's CA, this illustrated the resource dependency relationship between SE and the RFU. Firstly, it is important to remember that once CA was introduced, any VSC that achieved the CA standard automatically became *Clubmark* accredited. It is reasonable to assume that SE did not want one of its larger NGBs to fully withdraw from the *Clubmark* accreditation, which by SE's own admission, a senior official accepted that *Clubmark* had already "lost traction" (Interviewee SEA, 19.03.15). Furthermore, SE provided the RFU with substantial funding so the two organisations negotiated a mutually acceptable version of CA that satisfied the minimum requirements of *Clubmark* and kept the RFU 'on board'.

Safeguarding

During data collection the ASA were in the process of training officials to become safeguarding instructors so that the NGB could provide swimming-specific courses, at more locations to help VSC attendance. Similarly, EB were training individuals to become safeguarding instructors, however, the NGB was reliant on volunteers to assume the roles. The RFU had a considerably larger VSC support network so no shortcomings that affected this policy strand were identified.

Participation/membership

Due to the fact that the ASA and EB were guided by VSCs in relation to increasing membership strategies and that the RFU was a large NGB, no capacity issues that could affect implementation were identified. Although, the small EB regional team may have been a resource constraint regarding any increasing participation strategies. Also, the ASA divided membership development (growth) from the strategy to increase participation. That is, the ASA did not see VSCs as important regarding participation.

9.3.3 Development of knowledge

***Clubmark* (or equivalent)**

Analysis has clearly demonstrated that the knowledge of all three NGBs has developed over time, that is, that a process of policy learning was evident. The numerous framework

iterations, amendments, the introduction of an online platform and the establishment of a new quality mark emphasise how the NGBs have consistently evaluated and acted on VSC feedback. Another way EB and the ASA improved knowledge was as a result of the creation of the CSO/CDO roles. The roles allowed the NGBs to grasp how the diverse nature of VSCs, within a variety of contexts and environments impacted the success of implementation. Furthermore, this interaction enabled EB to realise that the knowledge of many VSC members' required up-skilling, which would allow for a greater understanding of policy requirements and, in turn, produce more sustainable VSCs.

Safeguarding

EB were in the process of educating volunteers to become safeguarding instructors to enable the NGB to deliver boxing-specific safeguarding courses in the hope that with boxing examples (rather than generic Sports Coach UK examples) the information would be more accessible to VSC members and this led to greater implementation success. Data suggested that all NGBs were very knowledgeable in relation to safeguarding requirements and were able to provide a great deal of expertise and advice to any club welfare/safeguarding officers requiring support.

Participation/membership

As mentioned earlier, EB and the ASA considered the needs of the VSCs and were led by them. The RFU would often develop initiatives designed to increase membership and participation that were regularly communicated to the VSCs but adoption was largely left to the discretion of the VSC. For this policy strand a lack of NGB knowledge was not identified and did not appear to affect implementation.

9.4 Identify and analyse the role(s) of VSCs in the process of policy implementation

The three specific policies selected for analysis were *Clubmark*, safeguarding and increasing participation and/or membership. The evidence presented in this thesis has clearly demonstrated that VSCs were fundamental in the process of policy implementation. The analysis revealed four key characteristics that proved to be significant factors affecting VSCs in the process of implementation. The similarities and differences in relation to three main policy themes between VSCs and across the three sports will now be discussed.

9.4.1 Interest and willingness

Clubmark (or equivalent)

When *Clubmark* was initially introduced in each of the three sports the feedback coming to NGBs was that many VSCs perceived the framework to be an increase in bureaucratic, needless NGB paperwork. As a result, the many VSCs in each sport demonstrated varying levels of resistance with some refusing to comply with the requests of NGBs to implement the framework. For those VSCs that commenced the implementation process the level of engagement was often superficial with some seeing the process as a 'tick box' exercise.

In both the swimming and rugby union case studies the evidence presented indicated that the NGBs developed the *Clubmark* criteria in attempts to ensure the frameworks covered every possible aspect of effectively administering a VSC. However, the accreditation processes became excessive and burdensome for many VSC members to complete, which further diminished interest. Far more clubs developed an interest and, as a consequence, successfully implemented the quality mark frameworks once the respective NGBs reduced the number of criteria and made the criteria more directly relevant to the interests of different types of clubs. In the most recent version of *swim21 (club Essential)* there were only 21 elements and *CA* consisted of just 15 statements (elements) rather than the 100+ elements each of the preceding versions contained.

For boxing, it took EB a number of years to capture the interest of VSCs across the country for *Clubmark* implementation. Willingness to engage only improved subsequent to the rebranding of the NGB in 2013, which established the role of CSOs who were then able to visit VSCs face-to-face to promote the benefits of *Clubmark*. Although this saw an increase in VSC interest, many clubs continued to bemoan the lack of relevance and opted not to work towards implementing the accreditation.

Safeguarding

As far as it was possible to determine all VSCs closely followed the implementation requirements developed by their NGB (and SE). There was little variation between the three sports or across the duration of data collection. Even if a VSC had decided not to work towards the *Clubmark* accreditation, safeguarding policies were of interest and tended to be adopted in strict accordance with the NGB guidance. The most common safeguarding elements covered were allocation of welfare/safeguarding officers and volunteers completing DBS checks. All VSCs analysed in the case studies displayed a strong

commitment to safeguarding, often implementing policies beyond the minimum requirements specified by their NGB.

Participation/membership

VSCs within each of the three sports tended to display similar levels of interests in implementing strategies to increase membership numbers but approaches to implementation were different between the three sports. The opinion in boxing VSCs was generally one of indifferent although if a CSO identified significant benefits from increasing a VSC's membership, then the club would often attempt to implement the strategy. In swimming, the VSCs were frequently constrained by the pool allocation in the facility in which their members trained, so demonstrated highly variable levels of commitment to the implementation of the policy. Conversely, given the fact that rugby is a team sport, VSCs were generally interested in implementing strategies to grow membership numbers to enable multiple teams to be fielded each weekend or to compensate for membership attrition. However, as was clear from the research incremental growth in membership often posed problems in ensuring that members were able to play on a regular basis. Managing the pace of recruitment was a significant management challenge for some VSCs.

9.4.2 Capacity

***Clubmark* (or equivalent)**

Many rugby and swimming VSCs in England are fairly sizable organisations (for example, the four VSCs in this research each had circa 200 members) and often have a committee consisting of more than six members. By comparison, boxing VSCs tended to be much smaller (for example, the two VSCs in this research had between 55-70 members) and regularly have small committees. In fact, many boxing VSCs were 'one-man bands' where one individual assumed a multitude of committee roles, which is what EB were attempting to change. The reasons EB were concerned with 'one-man band' VSCs was because of the danger of a VSC collapsing if anything happened to that individual. Furthermore, the lack of capacity resulted in inadequate resources available to drive implementation of *Clubmark*. Although rugby and swimming VSCs were generally larger than boxing VSCs, the data indicated that there was variation in VSC capacity within each sport. In swimming, for example, many more volunteers were required to assist with the support of training sessions (e.g. lane helpers), up to 10 times a week, rather than in rugby where training sessions were usually only twice a week. With this greater responsibility,

swimming VSCs were regularly stretched to capacity. As a consequence, many swimming VSCs found implementation of the first four versions of *swim21* a real struggle.

Safeguarding

Although many VSCs in all three sports were near (or at) capacity, due to the awareness of the risks to the VSC of non-compliance and the concern of members to ensure a safe environment, capacity issues were not seen to affect implementation of this policy strand. However, the investment of VSC resources in the implementation of safeguarding policy reduced the resources available to implement other policies and provided further evidence of the capacity of VSCs to prioritise between NGB and SE policies.

Participation/membership

The analysis highlighted how capacity affected the ability to implement strategies for VSCs in the sports of boxing and rugby. VSC members would aim to visit local schools to promote their VSC but were often constrained by time due to their full-time occupations and/or the willingness of members taking the time and effort to visit schools. As a note, data indicated that having the *Clubmark* accreditation did make it easier for clubs to visit schools. Yet, although capacity was an important factor in relation to implementation of membership/participation policies, of greater significance was the priority given within individual VSCs to the objective. Furthermore, it was also clear that the relationship between increasing membership and increasing participation was not always close either at the NGB or VSC level. In swimming for example, members and participants were considered to be quite distinct groups whereas in rugby the two categories were much more closely aligned.

9.4.3 Context

***Clubmark* (or equivalent)**

The variation in local VSC contexts affected the process of implementation. A rural location was a fundamental cause of VSC implementation difficulties. For swimming, attendance of various courses was a requirement of *Clubmark* but for rural clubs it was often difficult to: a) find cover for training when a volunteer was attending a course; and b) to have the time to drive a few hours to the courses after their full-time occupation. In boxing, one of the *Clubmark* criteria was to put on a boxing show, which could cost a few thousand pounds and required a certain number of carded boxers to compete, who then needed to be matched to an opponent. For a small rural (and urban) VSC this was an impossible

criterion to satisfy. Consequently, many VSCs found it extremely difficult to achieve *Clubmark*, even if they were willing to follow the process.

Safeguarding

Even with the variation in contexts, all VSCs in the case studies adapted safeguarding policies to suit their local club environments with no significant implementation issues.

Participation/membership

The small rugby VSC (STRC) appeared to suffer implementation difficulties, which emerged as consistent with VSCs in similar contexts. Regardless of the strategies adopted to boost their membership numbers, larger local clubs from higher leagues regularly acquired a number of the smaller club's players, which made it a challenge to maintain and develop the membership numbers.

9.4.4 Knowledge and skill level

***Clubmark* (or equivalent)**

As noted in section 9.2.1 when the *Clubmark* framework was initially introduced, evidence indicated that many VSCs across all three sports treated the process predominantly as a 'tick box' exercise. Over time, through policy learning (May, 1992) and an increase in support and guidance from the respective NGBs, the club members' knowledge, and therefore understanding, of the potential benefits associated with the accreditation process increased.

For the sports of swimming and rugby union the VSC committee members generally tended to be well educated with professional and technical occupations. This was important for implementation. It meant that they were better able to understand the policy documentation, the associated template and guidance information, and had the ability to produce the required evidence. Unlike the two other sports, in boxing, a consistent problem was the lack of (administrative) expertise in the majority of clubs. Interestingly, the two boxing clubs in this research appeared to be anomalies in comparison with the national picture; STBC had developed their own policies and procedures prior to the introduction of *Clubmark*. BTC faced implementation struggles akin to the majority of other boxing VSCs in the country until the coach recognised that one of the clubs' female members (who attended fitness classes) worked as a Personal Assistant and another worked in an office environment, so he approached them to join the

committee to help with the administration because, “I could tell they were kinda brainy” (Interviewee BAA, 23.04.15). The two most illuminating examples from the boxing data that indicated the struggles some VSCs faced was that a proportion of VSC volunteers had low levels of literacy and in one case, where the individual was able to read and write, the volunteer produced a constitution written in red crayon.

Safeguarding

In general, the swimming and rugby VSC members were able to understand the safeguarding policy documentation and had the ability to enact the specified requirements. For boxing, evidence indicated that although this policy strand was perceived as important, numerous boxing VSCs requested external assistance to produce the required safeguarding evidence or the members, in some cases, would just download the safeguarding template and suggest that the policy was then in place.

Participation/membership

Although this policy strand was of moderate to high importance to rugby VSCs, data indicated that there was often ambiguity in relation to the most appropriate and effective way of attempting to increase membership numbers. Swimming VSC members exhibited suitable knowledge and skill level but many clubs did not actively implement strategies to increase membership due to facility constraints. Indeed, their ‘knowledge’ sometimes led them to consider that an increase in club membership would not be in the best strategic interest of the club.

These characteristics demonstrate how actors at the point of delivery (the VSC members) were pivotal in the implementing process and that the interpretations of the individuals were significant for the success (or failure) of implementation. These findings are consistent with the bottom-up implementation analysis perspective. The second objective of this research was to develop an understanding of the role that NGBs play in the process of implementation in relation to three specific policies.

9.5 Reflection of the research process

The primary sources of data were collected via interviews with key actors, who had a prior awareness of *Clubmark*. The interviews conducted for this study produced a rich data set that allowed the researcher to develop an extensive understanding of the

complexities involved in the implementation process. The number of interviews and quality of the sample allowed for a detailed analysis of a complete cross-section of actors (from SE down to the VSC members), across the three sports, who were involved in the implementation process for the selected policies, which contributed to the reliability and the validity of the research. Houlihan (1997) stated that although comparative policy analysis can be problematic, the 'contextually sensitive comparison enables policy-makers to learn from other political systems facing similar problems' (p. 7). The lessons enable identification of the reasons why some policies are successful, and why some fail.

Access to NGB officials was fairly straightforward; contacts at the ASA and EB were approached to introduce the relevant actors; and the email addresses of senior RFU officials were deduced. A tentative research overview email requesting their assistance was fortunately successful. For the SE interview, an opportunity presented itself during a national research seminar that enabled a senior SE official to be interviewed.

A number of swimming and rugby club contacts were approached to assist in identifying willing clubs/club members. Then, once NGB officials were aware of the research objectives, they provided contact details of various club members who may have been interested in taking part in the study. Thankfully, the members of all clubs approached were happy to be involved. The initial boxing contact was made through the CEO and having approached boxing clubs with little success the CEO offered to put me in contact with two clubs. The CEO was provided with two characteristics (size and location) to help select the clubs and offer a point of entry. This meant that the selection was reliant on the CEO's interpretation. Another point to consider is that the CEO could have been provided with different characteristics, which might have produced a different data set. For example, characteristics could have included gender ratios in clubs or clubs with varying levels of black and minority ethnic demographics. It is important to note though that the analysis in this study was primarily focussed on the NGBs to provide the national picture, it was not the intention to attempt to generalise from the clubs.

As highlighted in the methodology chapter, the influence and power relationships that can occur between interviewer and interviewee did not materialise. The interview technique was well rehearsed, which yielded comfortable, conversational, and detailed responses from all interviewees. Furthermore, all interviewees (including NGB and SE officials) provided candid descriptions of their *Clubmark* implementation experiences. Furthermore, although heavily involved in grassroots sport myself (primarily swimming),

an awareness of resisting researcher bias was maintained throughout the study. Techniques adopted to ensure equal objectivity included regular discussions with my supervisor in addition to presenting various aspects of this research at international conferences to receive impartial feedback from other academics.

There were no issues with the document analysis process for the research and no problems with regards to accessing the relevant documents, which were identified as important for the analysis; the majority were available through the NGB's respective websites, SE's website, government and public websites for various policy documents and the few that were not initially accessible were obtained via membership of the Sports Development¹²³ website.

9.5.1 Implications for the implementation of *Clubmark*

On reflection, all six clubs used to inform the case studies were in fact fairly strong examples of VSCs. Although, STRC did display vulnerability where they suffered from bigger local clubs poaching a number of the better players. Therefore, it would have been interesting if clubs displaying some form of similar weakness in the other sports (boxing and swimming) were identified to enable comparison.

This research has highlighted how that a number of conditions within Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) top-down theory of implementation analysis closely relate to concepts of service quality and quality assurance. For example, *possessing the required combination of resources available* (3), *keeping dependency relationships to a minimum* (6), *understanding and agreeing policy objectives* (7), *ensuring tasks are specified in the correct sequence* (8), and that there is *perfect communication and coordination* (9) all correspond to standards (such as efficiency), which are central to quality assurance frameworks. As discussed throughout the case study chapters, satisfying Hogwood and Gunn's criteria helps to reduce bottlenecks and conflict, for example, during the implementation process. The empirical data across all three case studies demonstrated how the NGBs learned over time that contextual factors (such as geographical location) impacted the process of implementation. As a result a number of *Clubmark* requirements were modified (such as the introduction of grace periods) to improve implementation effectiveness and efficiency. It would now be beneficial to broaden the focus of this research to examine in greater detail the effectiveness of *Clubmark* in relation to the service quality literature.

¹²³ www.sportdevelopment.info (Accessed 17.09.16)

One of the recommendations from this research is that NGBs should follow the lead of the ASA by moving their *Clubmark* procedures online. The reasons for this have been documented throughout this thesis but to reiterate: an online system helps to satisfy a greater number of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) conditions for 'perfect' implementation in comparison to the traditional paper-based approach. Subsequent to the conclusion of data collection it has been determined that SE held consultations during 2016 with the ASA to develop their understanding of the ASA's *swim21* online portal due to the perceived effectiveness of the system. The plan was to transition all NGBs from the paper-based format to a similar online portal. Recently, SE updated the *Club Matters* online portal, where it now includes information about a new *Clubmark* online portal, which all NGBs and VSCs must use, replacing the paper-based approach. This is an important development, which reinforces the strength of this analysis and the validity of the conclusions and indicates that this research has contributed to the understanding of policy implementation. It is important that further research is now conducted to analyse the impact of the new online platform and whether the success rate of *Clubmark* implementation for various NGBs (particularly for the sports of boxing and rugby union) improves. This would add even greater, valuable insight to the academic body of implementation literature.

One final point that warrants attention is how that this research has illuminated the current policy concerns of both the government and SE. In Chapter 5 the government's new sport policy (*Sporting Future*) was introduced, which referenced how an independent report had been commissioned to examine duty of care in sport. The report has very recently been published and the number one *priority recommendation* is that a 'Sports Ombudsman' (a sports duty of care quality commission) should be created, which should have powers to hold NGBs to account for the duty of care they provide (p. 6). Additional priority recommendations suggest that duty of care should be measured (which links to the concept of quality assurance), the government should introduce a *Duty of Care Charter* and all NGB Boards should have a *Duty of Care Guardian* assigned who would have an explicit responsibility and leadership role. This report emphasises the importance and the string line that the government are placing on safeguarding and wellbeing. However, in specific relation to safeguarding the report suggests that there needs to be greater clarity where safeguarding polices are cross-departmental (which parallels a number of Hogwood and Gunn's (1984) conditions), that sports should collect safeguarding data in a standardised method, and the role of sports volunteers should be better recognised (Grey-

Thompson, 2017). These report findings suggest that there are issues with implementation. Future research is required to develop the understanding of why there appears to be policy erosion. Furthermore, the *Duty of Care* report did not once mention *Clubmark*. Is this another indication that the *Clubmark* framework has continued to lose traction (a concern raised by a senior SE official in chapter 5), or is this an oversight of the report? Either way, research analysing the impact of the report for the process of implementing modified or new safeguarding policies and recommendations would be an ideal departure from this research.

Overall, this study has achieved the objectives and has provided a contribution to the literature by demonstrating how the complex and heterogeneous nature of VSCs (and NGBs) affects the implementation process in community sport. The findings offer insight into why, or why not policy was given momentum and the consequential implementation challenges, which would provide a fruitful opportunity for future comparative research of NGBs and VSCs (of varying capacity) in distinctive contexts.

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Appendices

- Appendix A*** ***List of Interviewees***
- Appendix B*** ***Example of (a VSC) interview schedule***
- Appendix C*** ***Example of interview transcript (one page)***
- Appendix D*** ***ABAE original Clubmark Criteria***
- Appendix E*** ***Criteria for the ASA's original version of swim21***
- Appendix F*** ***swim21 club Essential Criteria***
- Appendix G*** ***The RFU's Club Accreditation***

Appendix A – List of Interviewees

Date	Interview code	Role/position	Organisation type (code)
19.03.15	SEA	Senior management	Sport England
14.08.14	EBB	Senior official	NGB – EB
29.09.14	EBC	Senior official	NGB – EB
10.04.15	EBA	CSO	NGB – EB
23.04.15	BAR	Coach, chair, welfare officer	VSC – STBC
14.05.15	BBA	Coach	VSC – TCB
14.05.15	BBB	Treasurer	VSC – TCB
19.11.13	SA	Senior management	NGB – ASA
02.07.14	SB	Senior management	NGB – ASA
12.02.15	SC	Senior management	NGB – ASA
14.04.15	SD	Senior official	NGB – ASA
10.07.15	SF	CDO	NGB – ASA
09.02.14	SAA	Coach, <i>swim21</i> coordinator	VSC – TSC
29.04.14	SAB	Welfare officer	VSC – TSC
09.02.14	SAC	Committee member	VSC – TSC
09.02.14	SAD	Chairman	VSC – TSC
09.02.14	SAE	Secretary	VSC – TSC
09.02.14	SAF	Treasurer	VSC – TSC
29.07.14	SBA	Committee member	VSC – STSC
29.07.14	SBB	Coach	VSC – STSC
21.08.14	SBC	Chairperson	VSC – STSC
16.01.11	SBD	Committee member	VSC – STSC
08.01.14	RA	Senior management	NGB – RFU
11.12.13	RB	Senior management	NGB – RFU
10.05.15	RC	RDO	NGB – RFU
28.11.13	RAA	Coach, chairperson	VSC – TRC
10.05.15	RAB	Safeguarding officer	VSC – TRC
02.04.15	RBA	Committee (membership)	VSC – STRC
02.04.15	RBB	Chairperson	VSC – STRC
02.04.15	RBC	Safeguarding officer	VSC – STRC
14.05.15	CSP	CSP officer	County Sports Partnership (CSP)

Appendix B – Example of (a VSC) interview schedule

PhD Interview Schedule – Rugby Clubs

What is your name and how long have you been involved with (or a member of) the club?
What is your current role?

Clubmark

Do you know about Clubmark (Seal of Approval/Club Accreditation)?

How long has the club been accredited for?

Did SoA change the club in any way since its introduction?

Did it affect your role within the club?

Was the club given criteria to follow/adopt/implement?

Where did the club get the information/criteria/guidance for SoA?

What information is passed down from the RFU? In what form? (Advice, requirements, support, monitoring?)

What does the club do with the information from the RFU?

Who carries out the tasks to meet the criteria?

Were the evidence tasks conducted as the guidelines suggest or are they modified in any way? (To make it more suitable to your club/easier to carry out?)

Is there a line of accountability? - Who in the club sends the reports/audits, where to and how often is this done?

Are the RFU interested in the outcomes of the audits? (Do you get feedback from the RFU or audit reports?)

What do you know about Club Accreditation?

Why/when did you move from SoA to Club Accreditation?

How is it different from SoA?

Did Club Accreditation change the club in any way since its introduction?

Where does the club get the information/criteria/guidance for Club Accreditation?

What information is passed down from the RFU? In what form? (advice, requirements, support, monitoring?)

Are the evidence tasks conducted as the guidelines suggest or are they modified in any way? (To make it more suitable to your club/easier to carry out?)

Child Protection/Safeguarding

Does your club have any child protection/safeguarding policies?

Do you know what they involve?

What guidance or support do the RFU offer in relation to safeguarding?

Do you have a welfare officer? Do you know what their role involves?

Is the club monitored or are checks made that the club implements a safeguarding policy? (By whom?)

Have the club adapted a safeguarding policy to suit the club in any way?

Increasing Participation/CASHFL (DCMS's 'Youth Sport Strategy' 14-25 age group)

Does the RFU offer any guidance or support in relation to the government's attempt to increase participation?

Does the club have any strategy that aims to increase sport participation of community members?

Does the RFU monitor or audit your participation figures? Is the club accountable for participation figures?

Are there any stakeholders/actors that affect general community sport policy implementation? (i.e. LAs, schools, parents etc.)

Do the relationships affect policy implementation? (Greater emphasis in certain areas?)

Appendix C – Example of interview transcript (one page)

AT	Who provided you with the guidance?
SAA	[SAB] worked it out according to Wavepower, he's now done the Time to Listen so he might go back and amend some of that but and then it was agreed at committee
AT	When [SAB] wrote that policy, have you had to show it to the ASA officer?
SAA	It's on the, on the site
AT	Oh so that was uploaded?
SAA	Yeah it was uploaded onto the site, yeah
AT	So, if there were any issues they would then feed that back to you?
SAA	I don't think specifically it says that you have to upload your policy to do with social media but I did anyway because it was a new policy and I thought I showed what the club was doing
AT	A third strand I'm interested in is the participation side. Do the ASA try and encourage or offer you support to try and increase your membership or is that, are they not interested?
SAA	I think they, yeah I think they did, they are always trying and yes they do send stuff round, they sent, there was some free course that was done on encouraging youngsters to be aquatic helpers and that sort of thing and therefore hopefully to go on to be coaches and teachers but to be fair we are already doing that, a lot of the kids do it because of Duke of Edinburgh and a lot of them do it because they do community service which is not one down from a prison sentence, or at least it was in my day! But it's part of what they do in school nowadays and so they're often volunteering and quite a few have come through and done that like you've seen you know we've, I can't remember the total but we've got currently about 18, quite a few have left last year, qualified teachers and coaches, which for a club of 194 is quite good and I can't remember what the hell I was saying now so, what were we on?
AT	Increasing the participation
SAA	Yeah, so an increase in participation and the other thing we've set up again off our own back really was a kind of learn to swim section, which we're not really allowed to call learn to swim because the local leisure centres get a bit shirty about it so they're called mini [section] and we start from the age of 4 and it's made such a difference for our club coming through because we've already got in just about every age group 4, 5, 6 swimmers, not necessarily good swimmers but enough to put a team in, a basic team and then obviously you might get some better swimmers afterwards as well so, because we'd often go, when I first started, I think we won 2 medals at county, you know we just had nothing set up, there was no on-going system for getting kids through, I think there was probably about 80 swimmers who were actively swimming at the club but once you start getting the feeder system through then the whole thing becomes an escalator and you can actually move up there
AT	So how did that...how do you as a club come up with that strategy to try and bring in?
SAA	It was the coach before actually and the committee, myself talked about it and decided it would be a good idea and then when he left I took it on and we trained up lots of teachers to teach and they now run 2 sessions so they do, well 4 sessions because they are half hours each so an hour on a Saturday morning and an hour on a, I can't remember when it is, a Tuesday, I can't remember, Thursday at [Town1] and the other one is at [Town2] because [Town3] won't let us do it, because it's quite lucrative teaching kids to swim and they want to keep that.

Appendix D – ABAE original *Clubmark* Criteria (extracted from the 2010 Resource Pack, pages 10-17)

ABAE CLUBMARK ACCREDITATION SUMMARY

This part of the ABAE Club Development Accreditation resource pack summarises the criteria that your club has to meet to become an ABAE Clubmark Accredited club as well as identifying information / resources available to assist you to meet the criteria. The ABAE criteria are based on the Sport England Clubmark criteria, but modified to reflect boxing requirements.

As you complete the evidence for each criteria you can check off the completed document on the checklist and place a copy of the evidence in the Evidence Folder.

Where templates exist to help your club achieve the criteria it will be referenced in the resources column under the prefix of 'T' (e.g. T1 is Template 1). Where further information is available in an appendix, it will be referenced in the resources column under the prefix 'A' (e.g., A is Appendix 1).

More detail about each of the criteria, including a rationale and templates, are included in the relevant sections.

Section 1: Duty of Care and Child Protection

ABAE Clubmark Accreditation programme criteria requires the club to:

Criteria (Minimum Standards)	Resources (to assist completion of pack)	Evidence Provided (How each criteria is assessed)
Child Protection		
1.1 Adopt The ABAE's policy and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults and implement the procedures laid down within and appoint a Club Welfare Officer and deputy who will promote and implement the policy.	<p>ABAE Child Protection Policy.</p> <p>ABAE Club Child Protection Policy.</p> <p>Recruitment and Training of Staff and Volunteers (T1).</p> <p>Coach and Volunteer Application Form (T2).</p>	<p>Documentation from Club minutes that it has adopted the ABAE's Child Protection Policy & Club CP Policy.</p> <p>Copy of Club CP Policy.</p> <p>Procedures for the safe recruitment and training of coaches and volunteers.</p> <p>Contact details of designated and appropriately trained Club Welfare officer and deputy.</p>
1.2 Ensure that the Club Welfare Officer, Deputy Welfare Officer and at least one coach (who could also be a welfare officer) have attended accredited Safeguarding and Protecting Children Workshop and stay up to date with policies and procedures.	<p>Safeguarding and Protecting Children Workshop.</p> <p>Also additional information from NSPCC & sports coach UK if required.</p>	<p>Certificate of attendance on accredited Safeguarding and Protecting Children Workshop for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Club Welfare Officer • Deputy Club Welfare Officer • A Coach.
Code of Conduct for Coaches, Officials and Volunteers		
1.3 Adopt a code of conduct for all coaches, club officials and other volunteers working with young people.	<p>ABAE Child Protection Policy.</p> <p>ABAE Club Resource Code of Conduct Template (T3).</p>	<p>Documentation from Club minutes that it has adopted the ABAE's Best Practice Guide.</p>
First Aid		
1.4 Have access to first aid equipment at all boxing sessions.	<p>Health & Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk.</p> <p>Template 4: First Aider details and location of first aid kit.</p>	<p>Completed T4 with location of First aid kit.</p>

Section 1: Duty of Care and Child Protection

Incidents and Accidents		
<p>1.5 Have emergency procedures for dealing with serious injuries and accidents, including telephone number of emergency services.</p>	<p>Illness and Injury Report (T5). Guidelines for dealing with accidents and emergencies (T4).</p>	<p>Emergency services contact details (T6). Copies of emergency procedures, identifying location of telephones, assembly point in the event of fire or bomb threat and club welfare officer contact details.</p>
Keeping Records: Attendance and Medical Registers		
<p>1.6 Have contact details of parents / carers and emergency/ alternative contacts and keep a register of attendance at each coaching session.</p>	<p>Club membership Form (T7). Attendance Register (T8).</p>	<p>Club membership registration forms. Evidence that the club collects contacts for parents / carers and emergency / alternative contacts for all members. Example of an attendance register (T8).</p>
<p>1.7 Have information on the health of club members regarding medical conditions that may affect that person's ability to participate in cycling activities. Your club should have a system in place of notifying coaches of such medical conditions where appropriate.</p>	<p>Data Protection Act. Club membership Form (T7).</p>	<p>Secure but accessible procedures on relevant individual medical conditions for coaches on a need to know basis. Example club membership registration form with section requesting relevant medical information and conditions. System to ensure disposal of personal information in compliance with Data Protection Act.</p>

Section 2: The Boxing Programme

Criteria (Minimum Standards)	Resources (Provided to assist completion of pack)	Evidence Provided (How each criteria is assessed)
Club Coaching Sessions		
2.1 Use suitably ABAE qualified coaches when delivering sessions to participants.	ABAE Health & Safety standards in clubs (A4).	Copies of ABAE coaching certificates of all coaches working in a paid or voluntary capacity in the club.
2.2 Ensure the Coach : Boxer ratio during coaching activities does not exceed ABAE recommendations.	Coach : Boxer ratio template (T8). ABAE Best Practice Guide.	Signed self – declaration Coach : Boxer ratio template (T8)
2.3 Provide a structured coaching programme, which promotes recreational boxing as well as supports ABAE talent identification and development programmes.	ABAE Coach resources. National Boxing Awards. ABAE Women's Boxing Guidelines. Sample Session Plan (T9).	Club boxing programme setting out recreational and competitive sessions. Description of each coaching activity. Completed session plan.
Competitive Structures		
2.4 Develop a suitable competition programme in accordance with ABAE guidelines.	ABAE Rules of Boxing. ABAE and appropriate regional championship calendars.	Description of the club's competitive activities and evidence of the club staging at least one boxing show per season. Evidence of club show.
Coaching Staff		
2.5 Use role descriptions, with clear roles and responsibilities, assigned when engaging coaches (who must be ABAE qualified), club officials and volunteers.	ABAE Child Protection policy and procedures. Sample coach task descriptions (T10). Example volunteer agreement form (T11). sports coach UK workshops. ABAE Best Practice Guide.	Details of club staff CRB checks from Regional Registrar. Details of appointed club officers. Confirmation of use of role descriptions.
2.6 Ensure all coaches delivering club activities are ABAE qualified and hold appropriate professional indemnity and public liability insurance.	Coach insurance information on ABAE Website. sports coach UK.	Details of registered club coaches. Self declaration of insurance (T12).

Section 2: The Boxing Programme

Club Venues		
2.7 Use safe and appropriate venues and equipment for all coaching and competition sessions.	ABAE Health and Safety Standards in clubs document. Emergency procedures for dealing with accidents, illness and emergencies (T4).	Completed venue risk assessment template (T13).

Section 3: Knowing Your Club and its Community

Criteria (Minimum Standards)	Resources (Provided to assist completion of pack)	Evidence Provided (How each criteria is assessed)
Sports Equity Policy and Awareness		
3.1 Adopt the ABAE Equity Policy and Club's own and comply with the policy in all club activities.	ABAE Equity Policy. ABAE Club resources – Equity Policy statement (T14).	Documentation from club minutes that it has adopted and implemented the ABAE's Equity Policy Statement.
3.2 Ensure one official of the club attends the Running Sports 'A Club for All' workshop.	Contact ABAE Regional Association or CSP for details of course.	Copy of certificate of attendance on workshop.
3.3 Ensure one coach of the club attends the sports coach UK 'Equity in your coaching' workshop, or that all coaches complete an equity task.	Contact ABAE Regional Association or CSP for details of course. Visit www.clubmark.org.uk for details of equity tasks.	Copy of certificate of attendance on workshop. OR Completed equity tasks.
Being an Accessible Club		
3.4 Have an action plan identifying how it will recruit and retain members from its community.	Equity action plan (T15).	Completed equity action plan.
Rules and Codes of Conduct		
3.5 Have a code of conduct for parents / carers and other supporters.	Sample code of conduct for parents / carers and other supporters (T16). ABAE Best Practice Guide.	A copy of club's own code of conduct for parents / carers that complies with ABAE model template and evidence of its implementation.
3.6 Have a set of rules for young people.	Sample set of Junior Club Rules for children and young people (T17). ABAE Best Practice Guide.	A copy of club's rules for young people that complies with ABAE model template and evidence of their implementation.

Section 4: Club Management

ABAE Clubmark Accreditation criteria requires the club to:

Criteria (Minimum Standards)	Resources (Provided to assist completion of pack)	Evidence Provided (How each criteria is assessed)
Insurance		
4.1 Have public liability insurance cover of at least £1m.	Information on insurance is on ABAE website www.abae.co.uk .	A copy of the club's public liability certificate.
National Governing Body Affiliation		
4.2 Be affiliated to the ABAE.	ABAE Affiliation information available from Regional Associations or direct from the ABAE.	Confirmation of the club's affiliation to the ABAE.
Constitution		
4.3 Have an open, non-discriminatory constitution.	Constitution (T18). Constitution & Terms of Reference (Commercial Organisations) (T19).	A copy of the club's constitution.
Communication with Parents and Carers		
4.4 Communicate regularly with parents and carers.	Club introductory letter (T20).	Examples of introductory letters and newsletters/web pages for parents / carers.
Developing a Membership Category for Young People		
4.5 Have a specific membership fee and pricing policy for young people.	Nil.	Club membership and pricing policy.
Club Links		
4.6 Have contact with at least one local school / youth organization.	Club partnership agreement (T21). Running Sports Workshop; 'Developing Sporting Partnerships / Developing Junior Clubs'	Evidence of club links with schools and youth organisations.

Section 4: Club Management

Club Links continued		
4.7 Have contact with its Community Sports Network including local authority Sports Development Officers and its' County Sports Partnership.	Running Sports Workshop; 'Developing Sporting Partnerships / Developing Junior Clubs'. Club links - Sports Development contacts Template (T22).	Evidence of club links with local sports development contacts.
Club Development		
4.8 Show commitment to further development and outreach work.	Club Development Plan (T23). ABAE Club Development Planning Information Guide.	3 year Club Development plan.

Appendix E – Criteria for the ASA’s original version of swim21

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT SWIMMING – TEACHING				swim21		
Name of club: <input type="text"/>						
Aim:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a quality, multi-skilled teaching programme that will develop core skills and lay the foundation for future enjoyment and participation 						
Element ref no	Audit ref no	Elements	Score			
			1	2	3	
1	60 64	Lesson programmes are progressive and reflect good swimming development practice, through a multi-skilled approach (e.g. National Plan for Teaching Swimming) (CM2)				
2	63	A suitably licenced teacher is identified for having overall responsibility for lesson programmes (see Guidance Notes)				
3	63	Sessions are led by a licenced teacher qualified to ASA Level 2 or UKCC standard (see Guidance Notes) (CM5)				
4	58	The teaching syllabus/programme is regularly reviewed to ensure it meets the needs of the athletes				
5	60	Lesson activities reflect the Fundamentals element of the Long Term Athlete Development model (CM2)				
6	58 60	Club communicates participation opportunities in additional activities that support core swimming skills (CM25)				
7	62	Club communicates to all members its philosophy and programme for teaching swimming (CM25)				
8	67	Internal competitive opportunities are open to all members (CM3)				
9	76	All athletes that compete have achieved the ASA Racing Start standard (CM8)				
10	65	Club uses awards (e.g. ASA Awards or suitable equivalent) as an incentive for the athletes (CM2)				
11	75	Athletes with the help of their teachers are involved in recording their progress by maintaining a 'Record of Achievement'				
12	47 49 50	Club has an annual programme for the professional development of their teachers which enables them to maintain their licence (see Guidance Notes)				
13	58	Club signposts children to local Swim 21 Skill Development clubs to enable them to progress				
14	78 79 80	Structures are in place to include disabled swimmers (see Guidance Notes)				
Score required		27 points	Total actual score			

NB References to (CM + a number) indicate elements that are also a Clubmark requirement.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT SWIMMING – SKILL DEVELOPMENT				swim21		
Name of club: <input type="text"/>						
Aims: To ensure that:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athletes have access to a quality programme of coaching and competition Athletes are provided with quality opportunities to develop technical skills in a training environment relative to their needs 						
Element ref no	Audit ref no	Elements	Score			
			1	2	3	
1	60 62 63	Head coach has written a personal coaching model (individual philosophy on coaching) on which all aspects of coaching are based (CM5)				
2	63 66 67	Club has produced and delivers an annual training and competition plan based on cyclical goals appropriate to the stage of development of each athlete (CM5)				
3	63	A licenced coach qualified to ASA club coach, or UKCC standard plans all training sessions (see Guidance Notes) (CM5)				
4	63	A licenced coach, who is qualified as a minimum to ASA club coach or UKCC standard, delivers all training sessions (CM5)				
5	78 79 80	Structures are in place to include disabled athletes at standards appropriate to the individual and the club				
6	79	Disabled athletes have a British Swimming National Classification (see Guidance Notes)				
7	66 67	Athletes compete in a progressive competitive programme appropriate to their age and ability (i.e. inter school, inter club, County or Regional competitions) (CM3)				
8	76	All athletes that compete have achieved the ASA Racing Start standard (CM8)				
9	68	Athletes access between 4 to 12 hours pool time per week, averaging 8,000 to 24,000+ metres per week for a minimum of 45 weeks per year in accordance with LTAD (CM1)				
10	68	As they progress athletes increase the number of hours/metres per session and the number of sessions per week in line with LTAD (CM1)				
11	69 70	All athletes undertake flexibility and core stability land training (see Guidance Notes)				
12	58	Procedures are in place to ensure the regular monitoring of the technical development of athletes' skills – as per the resources and log sheets provided				
			Actual score			

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
SWIMMING – SKILL DEVELOPMENT



Element ref no	Audit ref no	Elements	Score		
			1	2	3
13	75	All athletes maintain a personal logbook which is reviewed regularly by the Head Coach			
14	28	Coaches, with the club's support have on-going communication with the World Class Team			
15	47 49 50	Club has an annual programme for the professional development of their teachers and coaches which enables them to maintain their licence (see Guidance Notes)			
16	58	Club publishes criteria for progression from internal and external feeder programmes. This includes reference to minimum attendance requirements			
17	71 72 73	Club provides an annual education programme for athletes – minimum 2 workshops per year (CM28)			
18	72 73	Club ensures athletes, parents and coaches are educated/informed on all aspects associated with doping, medical and nutritional issues (see Guidance Notes)			
Score required		32 points	Total actual score		

NB References to (CM + a number) indicate elements that are also a Clubmark requirement.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
SWIMMING – COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT



Name of club:

Aim

• To provide a training and development programme which will consistently enable athletes to compete successfully at Regional, National Age Group and National Youth Competitions as part of a progressive pathway to performance

Element ref no	Audit ref no	Elements	Score		
			1	2	3
1	60 62 63	Head Coach has written a personal coaching model (individual philosophy on coaching) on which all aspects of coaching are based (CM5)			
2	61 63 66 67	The club has produced and delivers an annual training and competition plan based on cyclical goals appropriate to the stage of development of each athlete (CM5)			
3	63	A licenced coach qualified to ASA Coach or UKCC standard plans all training sessions (see Guidance Notes) (CM5)			
4	63	A licenced coach qualified to ASA Coach or UKCC standard delivers all training sessions (CM5)			
5	63	When ASA Coach is absent, a licenced coach, qualified (as a minimum) to ASA Club Coach or UKCC standard delivers the sessions (CM5)			
6	78 79 80	Structures are in place to include disabled athletes at standards appropriate to the individual and the club			
7	79	Disabled athletes have an IPC Classification (see Guidance Notes)			
8	67	Club consistently produces athletes who achieve top 20 positions in individual (Olympic) events at ASA National Youth and Age Group Championships			
9	66	Athletes compete in 12 competitions per year where their performances meet the guidelines provided (see Guidance Notes) (CM3)			
10	67	Athletes gain experience of competitive opportunities at a senior performance level			
11	58	Athletes undertake training tests in accordance with British Swimming protocols (see current British Swimming protocols)			
12	68	Athletes access a minimum of 12+ hours pool time per week, undertaking 30,000 to 40,000+ metres per week for a minimum of 45 weeks per year in accordance with LTAD (see Guidance Notes) (CM1)			
Actual score					

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
SWIMMING – COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT **swim21**

Element ref no	Audit ref no	Elements	Score		
			1	2	3
13	68	The majority of swimming sessions are of at least 2 hours duration (CM1)			
14	59 66	Coordinated long course 50m training and competition undertaken as part of a cyclical plan			
15	69	All athletes access a land training programme in line with current British Swimming approved guidelines – a minimum of 2 sessions per week (see Guidance Notes)			
16	69 70	All weekly land training sessions supervised by suitably approved/qualified personnel (see Guidance Notes)			
17	73 75	All athletes maintain a personal logbook that is reviewed regularly by the Head Coach			
18	28	Coaches, with the club's support have ongoing communication with the World Class team			
19	47 49 50	Club has an annual programme for the professional development of coaches which enables them to maintain their licence (see Guidance Notes)			
20	58	Club publishes criteria for progression from internal and external feeder programmes. This includes minimum attendance requirements			
21	71	Club has structured links with sports support services such as Further Education, Regional or English Institute of Sport and/or the private sector			
22	40	The club has direct links with athletes' schools in order to support swimmer and parent (CM27)			
23	71 72 73	Club provides an annual education programme for athletes – minimum 2 workshops per year (CM28)			
24	72 73	Club ensures athletes, parents and coaches are educated/informed on all aspects associated with doping and medical and nutritional issues (see Guidance Notes)			
Score required		41 points	Total actual score		

Nil References to (CM + a number) indicate elements that are also a Clubmark requirement.

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT
SWIMMING – PERFORMANCE **swim21**

Name of club:

Aim:


- To ensure that athletes can access training and support services appropriate to their needs and in a performance development environment which is focused and coach driven

Element ref no	Audit ref no	Elements	Score		
			1	2	3
1	60 62 63	Head Coach has written a personal coaching model (individual philosophy on coaching) on which all aspects of coaching are based (CM5)			
2	61 63 66 67	The Club has produced and delivers an annual training and competition plan based on cyclical goals appropriate to the stage of development of each athlete			
3	63	A licenced coach, qualified to ASA Coach or UKCC standard plans all training sessions (see Guidance Notes) (CM5)			
4	63	A licenced coach qualified to ASA Coach or UKCC standard delivers all training sessions (CM5)			
5	63	When ASA Coach is absent, a licenced coach, qualified (as a minimum) to ASA Club Coach or UKCC standard delivers the session (CM5)			
6	78 79 80	Structures are in place to include disabled athletes at standards appropriate to the individual and the club			
7	77	Disabled athletes have an IPC Classification (see Guidance Notes)			
8	67	Club consistently produces athletes who achieve top 16 positions in individual (Olympic) events at senior British Swimming and ASA Championships			
9	66	Athletes compete in 12 competitions per year where performances meet the guidelines provided (see Guidance Notes) (CM3)			
10	58	Athletes undertake tests in accordance with British Swimming protocols (see current British Swimming protocols)			
11	68	At maturation, performance level athletes access a minimum of 20 hours pool time per week, undertaking 50,000+ metres per week for a minimum of 45 weeks per year (see Guidance Notes) (CM1)			
12	68	The majority of swimming sessions are at least 2 hours in duration (CM1)			
		Actual score			

Element ref no	Audit ref no	Elements	Score		
			1	2	3
13	59 66	Coordinated long course (50m) training and competition opportunities are included in cyclical training plan			
14	69 70	All athletes access a land training programme in line with current British Swimming approved guidelines – a minimum of 3 sessions (see Guidance Notes)			
15	69 70	All weekly land training sessions delivered by suitably approved /qualified personnel (see Guidance Notes)			
16	73	All athletes maintain a personal logbook that is regularly reviewed regularly by the Head Coach			
17	28	Coaches, with the club's support have ongoing communication with the World Class team			
18	47 49 50	Club enables attendance at appropriate conferences, accredited courses and training camps to enable coaches to maintain their licence (see Guidance Notes)			
19	58	Club publishes criteria for progression from internal and external feeder programmes. This includes reference to minimum attendance requirements			
20	71	Club has structured links with sports support services such as Further Education and for the private sector			
21	71	Athletes access relevant support services from organisations such as the Regional Institute for Sport			
22	40	The club has direct links with athletes' schools in order to support athlete and parent (CM27)			
23	71 72 73	Club provides an annual education programme for athletes – minimum 2 workshops per year (CM28)			
24	72 73	Club ensures athletes, parents and coaches are educated/informed on all aspects associated with doping, medical and nutritional issues (see Guidance Notes)			
Score required		43 points	Total actual score		

NB References to (CM + a number) indicate elements that are also a Clubmark requirement.

Appendix F – swim21 club Essential Criteria



swim21 Club - Essential

swim21 Club is the ASA's aquatic quality mark for the development of effective, ethical and sustainable ASA affiliated clubs. swim21 Club Essential will support your club to grow membership, develop volunteers and ensure the sustainability of activity in line with the objective of your club.

Element	Your club should submit the following as evidence	Templates and Resources	Person(s) Responsible	
1	Club development plan detailing the club objective and four year objectives with annual action plan Section 1 - Governance Section 2 - Athlete Pathway Section 3 - Workforce Section 4 - Marketing and Communications	Club development plan		
2	Club Annual club budget and four year forecast	Template annual club budget Template Four Year Forecast		
3	Club equity plan to reflect equitable practices across the club	Club equity plan		
4	Club marketing and communication plan demonstrating how the club is marketed to new member and how policies are communicated to all club members	Template Marketing and Communications plan Social networking- Guidance for Clubs		
5	Club workforce development plan identifying training needs and succession planning for active volunteers and paid workforce	Workforce plan Recruitment and retention Policy Succession planning document ASA Good Club Guides		
GOVERNANCE	6	Evidence the ASA region has approved the club constitution	ASA Model Constitution	
	7	Signed statement, by club welfare officer, of compliance to ASA Wavepower policies	ASA Wavepower	
	8	Signed statement of compliance, by Club Chair, to the ASA Code of Ethics	ASA Code of Ethics	
	9	List of all personnel on the committee and within coaching/teaching teams. Role title Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Welfare Officer Head Teacher / Coach.	Template committee personnel record Template role descriptions	
	10	Signed code of conduct from each of the following Club administrators (volunteers/officials) Teachers/Coaches Parents Members (athletes)	Template codes of conduct	
	11	Club membership form for members and volunteers to include Medical information Emergency contact details Club data protection statement	Template membership form	
	12	Completed risk assessment form Minimum of 1 pool activity Minimum of 1 club trip activity Minimum of 1 non pool based activity (where provided)	Template risk assessments Guidance Notes for Competition	
	13	Club emergency procedures to include accident reporting and integration of facility EAP/NOP	Template Club Emergency Procedures	

Element	Your club should submit the following as evidence	Templates and Resources	Person(s) Responsible	
PATHWAY	14	Club Programme to demonstrate appropriate pool time and teacher/coach ratios in line with club objective Club timetable Number of teachers/coaches within each squad/section Swimmers within each section/squad	Template Club Timetable	
	15	Demonstrate how your club works with other aquatic providers to attract new members and support swimmer exit routes	Template Partnership Working Record	
WORKFORCE	16	List of all active volunteers and paid workforce in the club, updated in the last 6 months Role title Qualifications, DBS (where applicable) date ASA license number, CPDs (Continuous Professional Development) Disability awareness CPD Officiating qualifications and date	Template Club Personnel Record	
	17	Signed statement from Welfare Officer to confirm all relevant (see Wavepower DBS statement 2013) personnel hold a valid DBS certificate	Wavepower guidance on the Disclosure and Barring Service	
	18	Minimum of 4 current (within the last 3 years) safeguarding certificates from ASA approved course list	Wavepower guidance on Safeguarding courses accepted	
	19	Certificate of attendance for club welfare officer on NSPCC Time to Listen training	Time to Listen course syllabus	
	20	Head coach to have completed the Introduction to Disability Swimming online CPD	Link to IOS online and CPDs/SCUK course information. Guidance for aquatic disciplines	
21	Head coach to hold a minimum of UKCC level 2 qualification and have an up to date licence	Licensing guidance		

All policies to be dated and signed by the current club Chair, unless otherwise stated.

Appendix G – The RFU’s Club Accreditation



RFU Club Accreditation Scheme

The club undertakes a simple self review of its activities in line with the XV statements below. This can be met with the RDO or you can do this together. Since this is your accreditation, the RDO will simply ‘coach’ you through the session, asking questions and probing detail in order to elicit information that will strengthen your review.

Club Name

Statement	Club Review
Demonstrates and promotes rugby’s core values	
Has appropriately qualified coaches with recommended coach/player ratios for all teams	
Has appropriate systems in place to minimise injury and to support injured players	
Meets the needs of players by providing regular, relevant and enjoyable competition	
Actively addresses succession planning by recruiting players in targeted areas	
Welcomes and encourages new players from all sectors of the local community	
Provides regular support and training opportunities for volunteers, coaches and referees	
Regularly recognises and rewards the efforts and achievements of volunteers, coaches and referees	
Actively addresses succession planning by recruiting new referees, volunteers and coaches	
Has secured regular access to appropriate facilities to meet players’ needs	

Operates a disciplinary process to deal with contraventions of RFU regulations	
Manages club finances effectively and files annual figures to meet current RFU regulations	
Maintains and operates a health and safety policy and practices complying with statutory requirements	
Has a transparent constitution incorporating an equity policy in line with RFU regulations	
Has a clear understanding of the local community and ensures that rugby makes a positive contribution to its wellbeing	

Additional Mini & Youth Statements

Has an RFU trained Safeguarding Officer who follows RFU CRB requirements and ensures the club has a safeguarding policy	
Provides an appropriate number of coaches and volunteers who have undertaken safeguarding training in line with RFU recommendations and size of the club	
Manages an up to date record of parent/carer contact details	
Provides coaches / managers with relevant up to date medical information of all players	
Meets the needs of parents/carers by providing regular and appropriate communication utilising modern methods of communication	
Operates a pricing policy that allows all members who wish to play with an opportunity to do so, ensuring families are catered for appropriately	

Additional Women & Girls Statements

Manages an up to date records of female player registrations complying with statutory requirements of the RFU and RFUW	
Meets the needs of female players by providing regular, relevant and enjoyable competition whilst also signposting those talented players towards the player development pathway	
Has appropriately qualified coaches with recommended coach/player ratios for all female teams	
Has secured regular access to appropriate facilities to meet female players' needs	

Action Plan:	
1)	
2)	
3)	

I confirm that the information provided above by the club is a true and accurate account	
Name	
Club Role	
Signed	
Date	
I confirm that the club has undergone the accreditation in line with the RFU process	
RDO Name	
Signed	
Date sent to Twickenham	