Awards for All

An Impact Study Evaluating Sports Projects in the Awards for All Programme

Conducted for Sport England by the Centre for Leisure and Sport Research Leeds Metropolitan University

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1.   Introduction

1.1   Background and Context

Launched as *Millennium Festival Awards for All*, the scheme awarded its first grants in 1999. Since its inception the scheme has gradually evolved, but throughout it has been offering small grants of between £500 and £5000 to community groups. *Awards for All* (A4A) funds projects that enable people to take part not just in sport, but in art, heritage and community activities as well as projects that promote education, the environment and health. By the end of 2002 there had already been 13,948 grants awarded to sports related projects.

Awards for All is administered by the Community Fund on behalf of the five Lottery awards funds (Arts Council England, Community Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, New Opportunities Fund as well as Sport England). In its current form, all the funding bodies contribute to a 'joint pot' and decisions regarding allocation are made collectively at regional level (matching the nine Sport England regions). Unlike many other sources of finance, applicants are often awarded 100% of the costs of completing their project and are not expected to secure partnership funding.

1.2   Rationale of the A4A Scheme

The National Lottery has given Sport England the opportunity to distribute funding instrumentally to secure a range of social objectives. For example, the Sport England consultation for the review of Lottery funding suggested that the funding should be seen as 'a catalyst in the continuous development of healthy lifestyles and socially inclusive communities' (sportengland.org/lottery/lottery_1.htm). Sport England's publicity indicates that *Awards for All* is seen as opening another door for funding that did not previously exist – 'not just another funding pot'. It also promises a more accessible way of applying for resources and, moreover, that the Lottery distributors should operate as 'investment partners' to try to ensure that the projects succeed.

Recognising that Lottery Funding was going primarily to major organisations for large-scale projects, the Lottery distributors established this scheme to support local groups by providing small scale funding to enhance community activity. This is typically used to aid areas and groups experiencing deprivation and is predicated on the belief that small sums of money can have a significant impact. To this end it has three key aims:

- to extend access and participation
- to increase skill and creativity
- to improve the quality of life

Priority is given to small-scale organisations like youth/community groups, tenants and residents associations, schools and small sports clubs. Each region is also able to identify the kinds of group to which it will give priority. It is therefore necessary to examine the scheme's success in addressing its expressed priority of targeting areas and groups experiencing economic deprivation (www.sportengland.org/lottery/strategy/strat1.htm).

1.3 The Need for the Research

Annabel Jackson Associates had conducted research between November 1999 and March 2001 on the impact of *Awards for All* in England and a similar study for *Awards for All* Scotland in 2002. Both studies considered a variety of different projects across the full range of *A4A* funded activities (i.e. not just sport) as did a smaller scale research study conducted by Lynn Whitfield in 2001 for *Awards for All* in the South West. All reached similar conclusions that the scheme generally met its overall objectives although some improvements could be made. Sport England felt it needed national research specifically on sport to inform its debate about whether investment in the scheme is providing value for money in terms of achieving its aims and objectives for the scheme. The Centre for Leisure and Sport Research was therefore commissioned to conduct a programme that would:

- Review the effectiveness of promoting the scheme to reach the identified priority groups and get beyond those who usually apply for funding. [Is it reaching the deprived communities / small organisations / etc. intended?]

- Identify what the impacts of funded projects have been in terms of effectiveness of outcomes [Does *A4A* contribute to quality of life, enhance skill/creativity or extend participation?]

- Consider issues of sustainability and lasting effects. [Has the grant helped to make the organisation more secure and ensured its future continuance?]

- Gather feedback from community groups and those involved in the scheme regarding the appropriateness of its format and the efficiency and effectiveness of its administration. [Is the scheme well conceived and the process simple for applicants to follow, and do applicants get a swift response and know what is expected of them thereafter?]

1.4 The Report

We have drawn together material as appropriate from each component of the research, to address the key issues addressed by the study. Wherever possible we identify forms of good practice uncovered by our research that help to achieve the goals of *Awards for All* and provide feedback to the continuing evolution of the scheme. The different forms of research and assessment are set out in the next chapter with a brief description of the work undertaken by the research team.

Recognising that one of the key objectives is to extend the reach of Lottery Funding, in Chapter 3 we assess the efforts to do this by using both the existing *Awards for All* grants data base and our own field data as they relate to the priorities of: young people; minority ethnic groups; people with disabilities; women and girls; and deprived communities, particularly in rural areas. This chapter also considers the position of groups/organisations that might be considered to be potential recipients of awards, but who for one reason or another have not applied for or received a grant.

Chapter 4 reviews the success of the projects in achieving the key outcomes desired by *Awards for All*: increasing participation; improving skill levels; and enhancing the quality of life. Chapter 5 then extends that to the desired organisational outcomes regarding increased capacity and sustainability.

The sixth chapter considers the running of the *Awards for All* scheme, specifically as it relates to sport. This recognises the significance of a range of partners integral to the process, and reviews some of the mechanics of the scheme. Particular attention is paid to the promotion of the scheme and the awareness and knowledge of potential partners and applicants. We also address how easy it is to apply for an award, the kind of support that is available in doing so and the processes for providing feedback and monitoring.

The concluding chapter reviews the achievements of the sporting awards for all and considers the claim not just to be 'another funding pot', but one with a distinctive purpose and set of outcomes. We also consider the implications of the findings of the research and make recommendations for the future running of the scheme.

Finally, the appendices provide information on the data on which the report is based and the people who contributed in one way or another to our investigations.

2.   Research Approach

2.1   Secondary Analysis

An early briefing meeting with Sport England was used to clarify aims and objectives and provide background information on the running of *A4A*.

The *A4A* database of sports-related grants awarded provided useful orientation for the research team by giving some insight into the nature of projects being supported through the scheme. Beyond that the *A4A* database also allows an examination of regional variations, for example comparing distribution patterns for sport with those of other types of project in *A4A* and comparing *A4A* sport funding with that of the Sport England Lottery funded programmes.

Unfortunately the usefulness of the database for more detailed analysis of grant awards is severely constrained by the procedures adopted for data entry. The result is that there is no straightforward way of comparing the amount of money / number of grants directed to particular priority groups. For example, even when we thought we had identified projects intended to benefit minority ethnic groups, we found that subset included applications that had checked the box for 'other' on the basis that they are open to all. Such projects almost certainly are doing nothing to promote greater participation by minority ethnic groups. The matter is complicated further by sometimes suspect multiple ticking of boxes, making it impossible to distinguish who the primary beneficiaries of the project are expected to be.

2.2   Postal Questionnaire

Working from the aims and objectives of the research a structural framework was established for a postal questionnaire to be administered to recipients of grants. Some of the questions were adapted from the questionnaire used by Annabel Jackson Associates, but the majority had to be devised specifically for this study. A draft questionnaire was reviewed with staff of Sport England and piloted among local contacts in sports organisations. The questions were accompanied by an explanation of the purpose of the research and respondents were offered the inducement of being entered in a prize draw (see *Appendix 1* for a copy of the questionnaire and the overall results).

Using the *A4A* awards database, respondents were selected randomly from each of the nine regions in proportion to the number of sports awards allocated in the region. This produced a stratified random sample of 2000.

Questionnaires were mailed out on 26th and 27th February and a reminder issued on 19th and 20th of March. By the end of the first week following the initial mail out (after 9 nine days) there had already been a 34% response rate. In total there were 1,376 returns, an overall response rate of 69%. A few contained insufficient information to be useful, leaving an effective response rate of 68%. This high level of response for a postal questionnaire gives confidence in the representativeness of the survey.

74% of responses were from sports organisations (65% were sports clubs), and the remainder were almost entirely from schools (18%) and community groups (6%). These represented a wide range of projects, including (in rank order) the purchase of equipment, development programmes, establishing new clubs/teams, hiring facilities, coaching or coaching and equipment and staff training (see *Fig 1*). For just over two thirds (69%) of respondents the *A4A* funding was finished, although 42% of those were continuing the project with other funding. The remaining grant recipients were responding for *A4A* projects that were still underway, apart from just 1% that had never got going.

Fig 1 - Type of Project

What was the nature of the project for which you received an A4A grant?
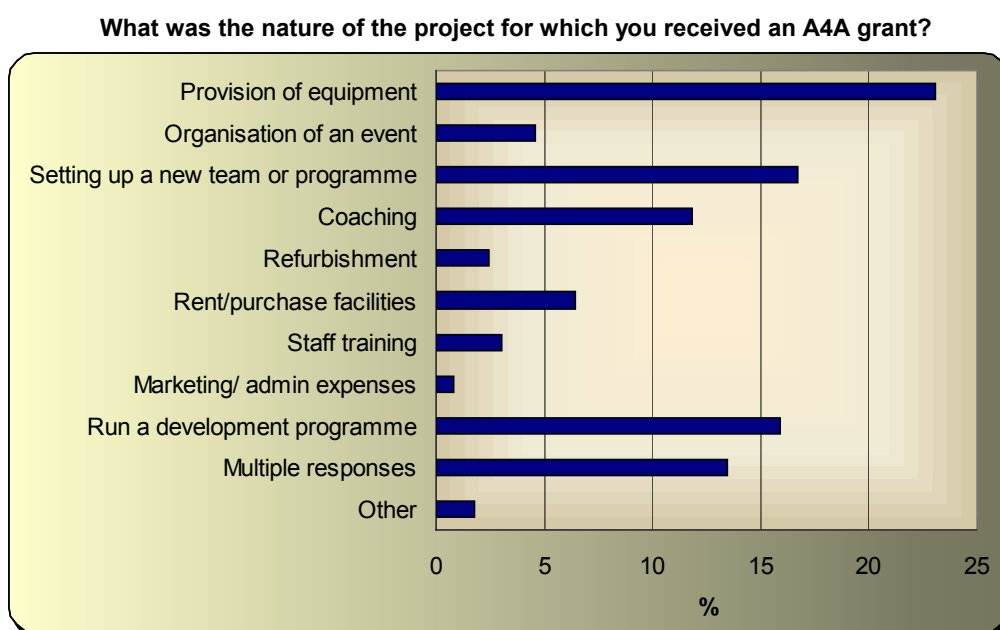
Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Analysis of the questionnaires was conducted using SPSS for Windows. All percentages given in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number after eliminating missing values and no replies. Full details of the results of the questionnaire and an analysis of the responses can be found in *Appendix I*.

2.3   Field Studies

In discussion with Sport England five of the nine regions were selected for closer study of what has happened 'on the ground'. Each was then assigned a particular theme to provide the focus of investigation reflecting Sport England priorities:

- East Midlands   Disability
- Yorkshire and Humber   Black & minority ethnic groups
- London   Young people
- North East   Women and girls

- South West   Rural deprivation

It was agreed that, given the aims of *A4A*, deprivation and disadvantage should be a common theme in the other regions beyond the South West. Similarly the concern with groups not previously supported by grant aid would be picked-up in each region.

There were four key groups to be interviewed in each region:
1. Grant deliverers – Sport England and *A4A* regional staff
2. 'Partner' organisations – Sporting Equals, English Federation of Disability Sport, Women's Sport Foundation, plus local authorities (e.g. sports development officers), Sports Boards, Federations of Sport, etc
3. Award recipients – organisations in receipt of grant
4. Participants/beneficiaries – local people affected as a result

Consequently, our field programme involved a large number of interviews. In total we conducted over 120 interviews/discussions apart from our attendance at 6 related events that gave us the opportunity to discuss A4A issues with many more (see *Appendix 2*). Given the diversity of interviewees, core topics varied (*Table 1*) although some questions were consistent across all groups apart from the participants (see *Appendix 3* for the fuller interview schedules). Each set of interview questions started with some 'soft' ones to encourage discussion and then followed the sequence that was most appropriate for that particular respondent. It proved unnecessary to ask all questions as answers to some emerged naturally through the course of the discussion.

2.3.1 Interviews with professionals

In each region the programme began with interviews with key professionals from Sport England, *A4A* and their partners. These included organisations, like the Women's Sport Foundation, the English Federation of Disability Sport and Sporting Equals, with a special remit relating directly to the various priority groups identified (see *Appendix 2* for a listing). Respondents were provided with a briefing about the purpose of the research prior to the interview, which was recorded and then transcribed under major headings.

2.3.2 Case studies of recipients

The *A4A* database was used to identify the subset of projects in each region that matched the national requirements of the study and the respective regional themes (see above). Advice was then taken from officers of A4A, Sport England and partners to narrow down to a shortlist of possible case studies. The research team then selected five projects in each region that offered a suitable range, both within individual regions and across the overall sample (*Appendix 4*). The final selection features a broad mix of projects reflecting the type of organisation, type of award/project and time of award.

Some of the selected case studies were alerted by Sport England or staff in other partner organisations. All were approached by phone and received a background briefing before being invited to take part. Only one of those contacted declined to be involved in the study; the remainder were extremely positive about participating.

Within each project we tried to ensure that different voices were represented and sought the original applicant, the primary deliverer (if different) and people who took part in the scheme as sport participants. The main topics covered with each type of respondent are set out in *Table 1*.

Table 1: Topics Addressed with Respondents

1. Deliverers (Sport England and A4A)	2. 'Partner' organisations	3. Community organisations	4. Project participants
Roles and responsibilities	Role (involvement)	Organisational structure	Involvement
Scheme rationale	Scheme rationale	Reason for application	Knowledge of scheme (A4A)
Promotion	Views on delivery	Scheme rationale	Impact (project outcomes)
Process	Impact on target group	Application process	Impact (organisation)
Monitoring	Impact (outcomes)	Impact (project outcomes)	Overall views
Impact (outcomes)	Overall views	Impact (organisation)	
Overall views		Overall views	

2.3.3 Group discussions

Members of the research team also held group discussions at five meetings attended by people representing a broad range of sports and positions within sport. This allowed an appreciation of general levels of awareness of A4A and feedback from those who had received grants and some whose applications had been rejected.

2.3.4 Community fieldwork

The previous parts of the research involved people who are already part of the *A4A* set-up in one way or another. We were keen to reach those people who appear to be the sorts of groups who might benefit from *A4A*, but who lie beyond its current reach. Unfortunately, for data protection reasons, we were unable to have access to details of groups that had had their applications rejected. Instead we identified three sets of respondents to represent these hard to reach sections of the community: in a Sport Action Zone in Bradford; within an area for which an application has been submitted for SAZ status in Leeds; and in surrounding areas. We chose the SAZ as our starting point because it is designed to encompass the very people who *A4A* may be able to assist in satisfying sporting needs.

Some of these respondents were identified via existing contacts, but to make sure that we did not restrict our data gathering to 'the usual suspects', we patrolled the streets, inviting views.

The same enthusiasm as shown by case study organisations was characteristic of those we approached directly while doing this less structured fieldwork. Once again interviews were a mix of face-to-face and telephone contacts. Some of these respondents were already well informed of *A4A*, in the case of others the discussion took the form of an information exchange. The main issues addressed with these respondents were:

- awareness and knowledge of *A4A*;
- the appropriateness of *A4A*'s priorities, conditions, procedures
- perceived potential benefits
- the needs of the group in terms of support required to secure such funding
- suggested changes to make *A4A* more accessible

3. Extending the Reach

One of the principles of *A4A* is that it should get funds to organisations that would not normally benefit from public funds. The postal questionnaire offered some evidence that *A4A* is extending the reach of public support for sport. Only 7% had previously applied for an *A4A* grant, less than half of whom had been successful prior to the current project. Some had been in receipt of funds from more than one source (*Table 2*), but overall only 29% had received any external funding before this *A4A* grant; this means that a large majority (71%) had not had previous funding. Most of this sample could therefore certainly not be seen as habitual grant recipients. Indeed, some of the organisations (8%) were formed specifically in order to apply for an *Awards for All* grant, half of which indicated that the organisation intends to continue even after the *Awards for All* project has been completed.

Table 2: Sources of external funding prior to A4A award	
Source	*percentage of respondents*
Local authority	19
Charity	12
Other National Lottery	4
Other A4A	3
Other Sport England	3
N.B. Some organisations received funds from more than one source	

The central databases allow some insight into the regional distribution of Lottery funding. *Figure 2* compares the distribution of all *A4A* funding from the joint pot with that of *A4A* sports awards and grants from the Sport England Lottery Fund. While London and the North West have consistently done better in terms of £/capita, this depiction, based on number of awards, suggests a more complex picture, but one in which the North East and South West appear relatively successful.

Fig 2 - Comparison of regions and different forms of grant aid (numbers of grants)
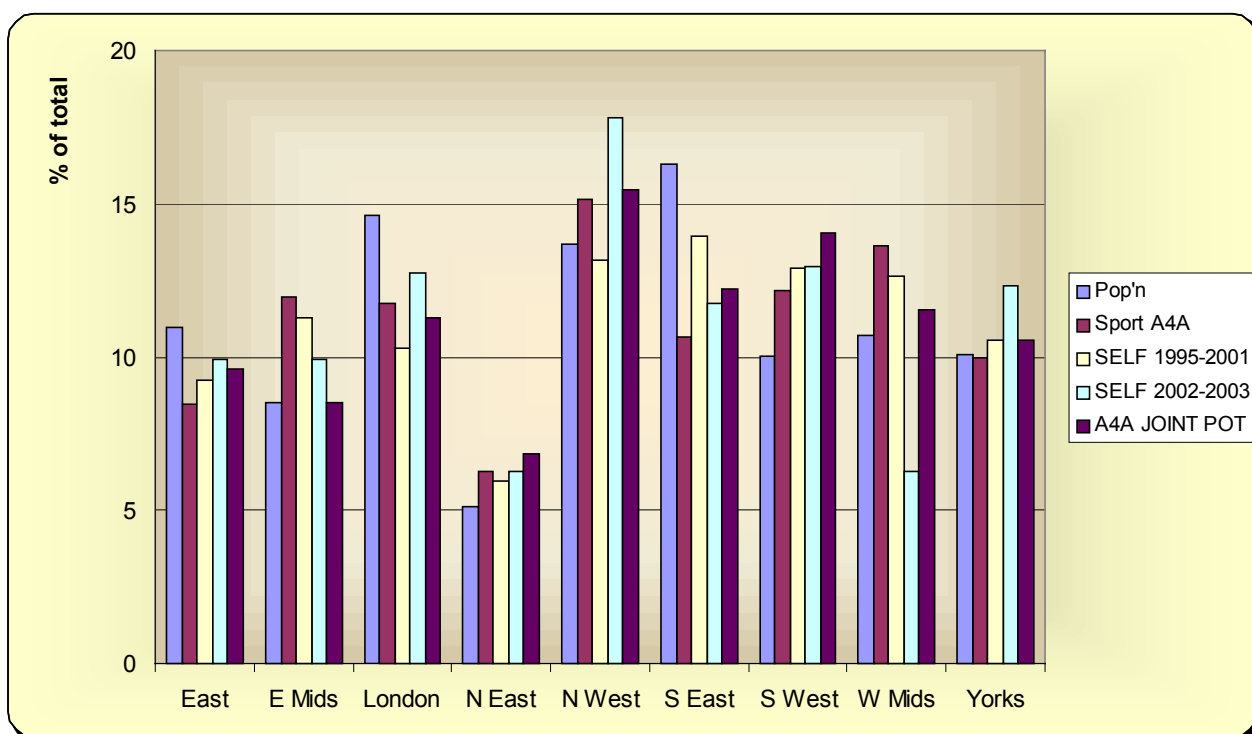
Each *A4A* regional office has identified a set of priorities (anything from three to seven). Most of the regions have been reviewing these, but *Table 3* shows the extent of those being used at the time of the research. Importantly, these are *A4A* priorities determined by the Joint Regional Committees and may not be the same as Sport England would otherwise choose. For example, women and girls are identified as a priority in only two regions.

Table 3: Regional Priorities – frequency of use

Priority	*Number of regions*
Black and ethnic minorities	9 (all)
Disabled people	8
Disadvantaged areas	6
Isolated rural areas	6
Young people	4
Community groups not previously funded	4
Older people	3
Women & girls	2
People with particular needs	1

As explained in Chapter 2, within each of our regional study areas we focussed on a different priority group. A summary of the recurring themes appears at the end of this chapter for those wanting a quick guide.

3.1   *People with Disabilities* (East Midlands)

A recent Sport England survey of participation by disabled adults concludes that opportunities are limited by comparison with the general population:

> Sports participation rates for disabled adults are significantly lower than for non-disabled adults. This is true for people with a wide range of different disabilities (Sport England, 2002).

The situation is adversely affected by the incidence of low incomes, transport issues and wider social disadvantage among disabled people, combined with a general lack of information available to them about possible sports opportunities. There are a number of national initiatives built around trying to remedy this situation, but these are still in the relatively early stages of development. Past interventions have had limited overall impact on participation in sport by disabled people. The *A4A* scheme is different in offering an easily accessible means of facilitating (primarily) small-scale projects that can have a significant impact on local opportunities for disabled people. It also has the potential to empower local groups to initiate action to help themselves. However, as with other socially excluded groups in this study, further assistance is often required to enable such groups to take full advantage of the opportunity.

The English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) was involved in the original development of scheme priorities at national level and has also been party to local developments in several regions – there is a disability representative on most JRCs. Work with people with disabilities was the focus of our study in the East Midlands where this represents an *A4A*

regional priority and EFDS has been a partner from an early stage. Despite this record, EFDS nationally is concerned that the grants management system operated by *A4A* does not supply them with sufficient detail to keep them adequately informed. One of their concerns is that several of the schemes that have been recorded as addressing disability, are not in reality doing so. The Regional Director of Sport England was similarly cautious:

> "Good quality schemes for disability are coming through, although we still get cynical ones, e.g. ramps for access or toilets which are accessible but primarily intended for older members or anyone to use".

Commenting on their decision to fund an *A4A* promotional post from the 'target group action plan', a Sport England officer noted, "Its worth has been proved since the number of disability applications has gone up". The person appointed supports and liaises with the respective county disability-specific officers and gives direct support to disability groups where there is no county post. One club chairman was particularly appreciative of the very helpful support received from the post holder over a series of three meetings. EFDS had hoped for more of these posts to be established, but the idea has fallen foul of the current Sport England funding hiatus.

EFDS officers feel they have to be heavily involved in the application process in most cases. One EFDS officer suggested that "disability groups have often been influenced by the advice they have received on applying but not always then been ready to put projects into action once the application has been approved – they are not as used to the process of putting in applications as others". For some disability groups the conditions of award are difficult to meet (constitutions and proof of financial arrangements). To address this EFDS offers advice and has prepared templates which can be adopted. However, despite *A4A*/Sport England/EFDS 'dummy' constitutions, one disability representative still commented that the *A4A* documentation was a "major stumbling block for disabled and other under-represented groups".

At an informal activity group that has since become an established club it was noted that, "The EFDS were a critical friend – a source of help and advice throughout [the application process]". There was a strong message that *A4A* provides an opportunity for disability groups but that, where organisations are new or informally structured, outside assistance is often needed in order to exploit the opportunity.

> "If it hadn't been for EFDS coaching us through the process, we would not have made the application at all. It is difficult for a layman and time constrained community worker to find the time or inclination to complete all the paperwork. I know of other projects that could qualify for funding, but who have abandoned the application because it is too onerous. EFDS was a major help, without partner organisations' assistance applications such as this one would not get made." (newly formed disability club)

There was general agreement that *A4A* has provided significant additional and seedcorn money for groups that would not normally have got funding. "This is one of the schemes we are most positive about" (EFDS officer).

There is no doubt that historical attitudes still linger in regard to disability. It was suggested that some disabled people react to these by thinking they should get money because of their disability, while the officers are trying to encourage a more forward looking approach in accord with models of sports development. In attempting to do that the chairman of a newly formed club, having not previously made an application, was pleasantly surprised by how much money they received. Elsewhere, a disabled participant had come to appreciate that "if you don't apply, you won't get", and they are now considering how to get funding for other clubs they are involved with. However, an EFDS officer found it difficult to say definitively that *A4A* has been a catalyst for future projects. Nonetheless, they were aware of some groups that did not previously exist and have now gone on to develop further.

> "It has definitely encouraged the formalisation of previously loosely formed groups, which have now become established clubs. One of our initial concerns was about the tranche of disabled people who don't organise into clubs – could they access funding? With support they are able to take that step." (EFDS officer)

The recurring theme was one of achievement in terms of both applicants (winning the grants) and participants (through involvement with the funded projects). Overall the result is a change of horizons and respondents are typically very positive about *A4A*.

> "Yes, it's successful as it's a lot easier [to access] than other schemes and it's more successful in hitting the target group than others." (EFDS officer)

> "It met my expectations and went beyond them." (project participant)

3.2 Minority Ethnic Groups *(Yorkshire and the Humber)*

The number of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups accessing funds reveals a level of awareness of *A4A* and we found enthusiasm for *A4A* built on considerable optimism that real benefits had resulted from the scheme. The success of some has given growing confidence to others. Nonetheless, there are many bona fide organisations who have not heard of *A4A* or who have neither the trust nor confidence to start to get involved in the process of applying for funding. Making the first step is fraught with problems for groups who do not naturally access 'mainstream' methods of support. Individuals and organisations involved in a range of capacities believe that much more can be achieved: "the message needs to be spread further".

To appreciate issues of access to *A4A* funding for BME communities, some of the structural characteristics involved need to be recognised. Many organisations are established as sports groups whose sole function is to provide opportunities for participation, competition and the raising of sporting standards. This, as with many sports clubs, often begins to generate a desire for social activity which changes the emphasis and needs of the club. Other groups emphasise their role in the community and sport is secondary to that; typically, "we can see lots of our young people getting involved in crime and drugs and want to do something about it". They are established to provide for a range of community needs and are primarily interested in social cohesion and improved quality of life through community development. Sport often becomes a highly desirable adjunct in achieving these aims. The two strands are frequently and inextricably intertwined and herein lies a crucial issue for further expansion of

A4A. Should the promoters of *A4A* develop strategies to reach groups through the sporting network or through the community network?

In our fieldwork most of those working within BME communities believed that *A4A* does indeed reach those parts of the different communities sought out. The consequences are considered to be very positive and empowering for both the experienced and newcomers. *A4A* has the potential to achieve more than other schemes partly because of this 'bottom up' approach that ensures involvement and ownership. This is seen as a crucial element in further development, but the view is tempered by acknowledgement that many groups with whom liaison workers have contact are reluctant to enter the process. The reasons range from pre-conceived ideas about chances of success to simple fear of filling in the forms (either correctly or at all).

It is increasingly difficult to isolate measures for particular groups from national and regional targets influenced by policy debates about the 'cross-cutting agenda'. Our experience suggests these are being directly addressed in terms of economic deprivation, issues around crime, drugs and community health. There are additional benefits perceived in cross community relations and evidence of different minority groups sharing knowledge and experience to further their ambitions. One new Asian group enthused about the contacts who had advised them: "We were helped by some of the people from the Caribbean Sports Club who work with *BEMSport*".

A more focussed approach is seen by BME groups as essential to future expansion. The view of grant recipients interviewed in Yorkshire is that Sport England is doing a relatively good job of reaching out to the world of sport. The problem for minority ethnic populations (and other hard to reach groups) is that these traditional sporting networks are not so effective in reaching less accessible communities. It is therefore appropriate that an alternative line of communication is pursued that reaches out through the community network instead of the sporting network. In Yorkshire, Sport England uses the system it set up via *BEMSport* (Black and Ethnic Minorities Sports Forum - Yorkshire) and employing consultants with a community work background. The latter are being successfully used both to transfer the message and to empower BME groups to access *A4A* funding.

There is a view that the training of community trainers who are able to facilitate both further training and support for individual groups, as has happened through *BEMSport*, is crucial. The consultants employed amplify this view and place it at the top of the list on their wider strategic map, independent of any *A4A* initiative. Further support for this approach comes from the BME communities and those employed to deliver this work but this is tempered by a concern that whilst much more could be done, resources are needed at a higher level than are currently available. This is both in terms of funding the training of more trainers and providing more money to support the greater number of schemes that would follow.

The money reaching BME groups is providing a much needed boost to the development of sporting and social cohesion. However, examples have been found of groups classified as providing for BME groups who are not actually doing so. This is a procedural fault in that groups who complete the form and do not specifically address any single target group but who claim that they are 'open to all sections of the community' are classified incorrectly. These groups are engaged in genuine sport and community development and are making a very positive contribution. They are however not making any real input in to the

development of BME communities and as such their funding by *A4A* may be questioned if that were the reason they were granted money.

These concerns notwithstanding, *A4A* is generally considered by BME groups to be one of the most successful methods of distributing lottery funding. It is providing targeted resources for a range of groups and activities many of whom might not have received any financial support without it. In so doing *A4A* is having a real impact on sporting and social development within BME communities and there is resultant strengthening of existing groups and real support for fledgling organisations. This in turn is generating the confidence so important to long term sustainability and development.

3.3   *Young People* (London)

Projects aimed specifically at children and young people were identified in London where case studies concentrated on educational and charitable agencies specialising in working with these age groups. In practice many applications for activities involving young people come from organisations other than sports clubs. The skill of schools and mainstream charities working with young people to apply for this funding is often much greater than that of small sports clubs. These sports clubs are slow to hear about the opportunities, may have difficulty with the form filling, and cannot easily provide the supporting documents.

Because the scheme is now being over-subscribed, little is being done by *A4A* to attract new applications in London. Professionals (e.g. teachers, sports development officers, charity workers) find the forms relatively easy to complete, though schools find it hard to understand why the supporting documents should even be necessary, believing that their status and financial responsibility should go without saying. For such individuals and organisations, an *A4A* grant can be a relatively small part of a total budget, but one that may enable an activity to take place that would not otherwise have been possible. Some process several applications:

> "We run a football league for disadvantaged teams (homeless, refugees, drug rehabs etc.). We apply for an A4A grant for each team on their behalf. They receive the money and pay part of that back to us for services provided." (charity worker)

Where equipment has been purchased with some or all of the funding, it is usual for this to be seen as now being part of the substantive equipment base of the organisation (e.g. the school). As such, the expectation is that it will be repaired/replaced in due course from mainstream funding - the equipment becomes part of the main PE repertoire and is available in curriculum time as well as for the A4A project.

Small sports clubs are more difficult to track, and do not necessarily stay in existence for long. Projects run by volunteers and aimed at providing new opportunities for disadvantaged young people are often short-term, ending when the money runs out. The ability to subsidise the participants is dependent on external funding that is unlikely to be replaced in due course.

Many of the projects, and the equipment they have provided have enabled young people to take part in sports activities that they would not normally have either:

(a) contemplated (for example, a strong interest in cricket has been developed among Turkish and Kurdish communities in a primary school in Islington); or
(b) been able to afford (for example a cycling club at an East End school).

New sports can appeal to different children who may be less motivated by the 'traditional' games on offer. In inner-city environments, the lack of playing fields at or near their school or home has further limited their opportunities in the past. *Awards for All* has succeeded in introducing many young people to sports that they would not normally have encountered, and in some cases they have discovered and revelled in their unknown talent. Almost by definition *A4A* has contributed to increased participation.

> "We had a go in our PE lesson and I came second. I didn't know that I would be any good at it until then. Now I go to the club every week and we have won the Panathlon against 3 other schools" (12 year old girl member of school cycling club)

All the projects for young people reviewed in this survey were in areas of urban deprivation, and many of the communities benefiting have a multi-ethnic mix (one school visited had students with over thirty mother-tongues). In some cases this wide range of ethnicity has led to confrontation or self-segregation, but the ability to offer common interests through sport has helped to promote racial harmony. Sport has proved to be an excellent way of bringing these groups together even if the children do invariably choose their teams along ethnic lines. Unfortunately, some respondents also observed that young people may face parental pressure to conform to their ethnic norms outside curriculum time, thereby severely limiting their opportunity to participate in after-school clubs. Moreover, as one teacher pointed out: "It's difficult to get some of the children to attend or have any commitment to after school classes. A lot of the children have to attend Arabic classes after school."

The very nature of some of the communities for whom the funding is secured challenges the possibility of development and sustainability. For example, a youth centre, which provides support for homeless young people, organises an indoor football session each week and take part in a league once a month. However, the number of players involved at any one time is generally small (no more than 8-10) and the participants are constantly changing (as would be expected by the nature of the institution).

The projects which are based in institutions like schools have enabled highly committed and inspirational teachers to improve the education and lifestyle of their pupils. The legacy of the new facilities and equipment provides optimism for the future that the projects will continue to flourish and more young people will have the opportunity to benefit. However, it is clear that the success of the projects (indeed the inspiration behind them) is not in the institution *per se*, but dependent on the commitment, enthusiasm and vision of one or two outstanding individuals. When they move on (most of these individuals are relatively young and likely to make career moves) the project may wither.

As might be expected the young people participating in the activities provided by these projects had little or no knowledge of *Awards for All*. However, most did recognise that something new, and something they considered to be good, has been provided for them. The older age groups understood that these things had to be paid for and that somebody must have provided the funding ("although it could have been the school").

Those responsible for the applications were all very complimentary about the programme. They recognised that, even with any shortcomings that they might have identified, it was still the easiest and most effective funding programme that they had encountered in their work with young people.

3.4 Women and Girls (North East)

The General Household Survey (1996) identified that the North East was the English region with the biggest gap between male and female participation in sport. Moreover, women and girls represent one of the regional foci for *A4A*. It is thus encouraging that a significant number of the projects to have been funded are indeed led by women and girls, explicitly for the benefit of women and girls. However, it is questionable whether the majority of projects claiming to provide a new or enhanced service for women and girls are actually doing so. Approaching half of the applicants are male, and the majority of the project descriptions do not make specific reference to women and girls, so there is a concern that groups have ticked the 'women and girls' box to satisfy the requirements of the awarding body.

According to the assessment of Sport England in the region, established groups are adept at using *A4A* as a resource. Beyond that, targeted work through the Women's Sports Foundation and other partners is engaging those who are harder to reach. It was recognised that while this input may increase the quality, as well as quantity, of applications, the process is quite slow because of the need to generate constitutions and bank accounts. Despite the acknowledged successes of the scheme, most partners feel that awareness could be higher and are concerned that even among those who do know of it there are many who feel it is not for them, even that there is a catch.

While the partner organisations considered the application form to be suitably accessible for the groups they are working with, many applicants found it daunting and were therefore extremely appreciative of the support they had been able to get. By the applicants' own admission, some of the bids may never have succeeded without this input. Although the conditions had caused delays for some, they were not considered to be inappropriate. Sport England does encourage potential applicants to consult an appropriate support agency or previously successful bidders. There is now a network of support agencies in place across the region (available to any applicant).

All of the projects assessed in the North East are located in the context of, and seeking to address, some aspect of deprivation, some more explicitly than others. For example, an outdoor activity project was described by the grant applicant as being "for socially isolated women, often in economically deprived situations", and as such she sees the *A4A*-funded activity programme as a "vital service" because "not a lot else is provided in this town". While none of the participants reported direct experience of adverse economic circumstances, some commented upon the positive contribution made by *A4A*-funded activities to those in this situation. The girls from the outreach branch of a netball club remarked that some had stayed away when the price of admission was increased to £1, highlighting that cost is still an issue for some, despite the advances the club has made.

There was a consensus among partner organisations that new opportunities for women and girls are being created through *A4A* funding. New clubs are generated, and perhaps more

importantly, women's, girls' and junior sections are instigated through the use of this money. This is neatly summarised by a partner working in girls' sport who reported that "more clubs have started and more clubs are now doing more things than they did before". However, a concern was expressed that some activities, sections and even clubs would only exist while the *A4A* money is available.

In most of the case studies it was reported that activities are being provided which would have been impossible without *A4A* support. This provides some evidence that *A4A* is capable of challenging traditional gender, geographical and economic barriers, and in at least one instance, the very women who would traditionally encounter discriminatory forces are shaping their own destiny. This women-led group is now more aware of the support mechanisms available but simultaneously less reliant upon outside backing ("Our house is in order now"). While there is evidence that rank-and-file club members from similarly excluded backgrounds are sharing in the benefits, some of the bids have been led by women and men from less disadvantaged circumstances. There are encouraging instances of participation amongst hard-to-reach sub-groups, such as the number of 16-17 year-olds attracted and retained by one club. The outdoor activities project, meanwhile, provides activities for women in the 25+ age group, and is particularly appealing to women aged 40 and over, whom the applicant feels are disadvantaged in many walks of life. Elsewhere, some of the footballers commented that previous experiences with women's and girls' football clubs had not been positive, but that the *A4A*-funded club is more professional and confident in its approach.

The partner organisations were persuaded that the empowerment of women's and girls' organisations is happening in the region. However, they were divided on whether *A4A* is more responsible for this development than other funding pots, although examples were cited where *A4A* has made a significant difference. One of the projects is in a community which ranked 9th nationally in the Index of Multiple Deprivation in the DETR's 2000 study and is now recognised as offering an example of local success. The case studies illustrated how *A4A* funding has contributed to the empowerment of women in potentially excluded situations. We received reports of feelings of increased confidence and for some, *A4A* has acted as a springboard so that they now feel prepared for the challenges of future bids to this and other schemes. It should also be noted, however, that 2 of the 5 groups had men involved in the application process, so the extent to which women and girls have been empowered in these circumstances is less clear. On the other hand, one netballer, who has been 'in the system' for 10 years, feels that the club would benefit from the involvement of men and boys, and this would not compromise the positive strides made by and for women and girls.

The partner organisations interviewed in the North East are complimentary about the positive contribution made by *A4A* to marginalised communities. It is seen as an excellent way for groups to get started, and in some cases is the only viable source of funding for them. All hope that, even in a climate of declining Lottery sales, the programme will continue to be resourced. The applicants within our case studies have all had a very positive experience and would unreservedly recommend others to apply for *A4A* funding. Most will now apply again to *A4A* or other sources, and feel better equipped to do so. One applicant had found *A4A* to be "a great motivator in simply being available to these sorts of groups in the first place, encouraging them to feel valuable to society". Participants too are overwhelmingly positive and would definitely recommend other groups to apply to *A4A*.

3.5   *Rural Deprivation* (South West)

> "It is certainly great to have your lungs full of clean air. And it's a nice place to raise the kids. But if you are one of those kids, out in the sticks and feeling that there is little else to do but breathe … it can seem small recompense. One of the biggest problems facing many – particularly the young – living in our villages and hamlets is isolation, compounded by lack of transport." (Culture South West, 2001: 17)

Awards for All acknowledges that deprivation is not restricted to urban areas. Recent research commissioned from Durham University by the Community Fund noted how localised deprivation can easily be overlooked when dealing with aggregated statistical data. A consideration of 'bench-mark' measures of deprivation and disadvantage in England led to the conclusion that no measure of deprivation at an area level can identify every 'pocket' of deprivation, and that these pockets probably occur more often in rural areas (Community Fund, 2003). Although deprivation is a common issue in A4A deliberations, and running through this report, we focussed specifically on rural deprivation in the South West. The problems of isolation and limited sporting opportunities, as identified in the quote, are not faced only by the young in rural areas. Facilities, travelling distance to get to them and choice of activity once there, are all limiting factors for anyone interested in sport in such locales.

Since larger facilities are more commonly located in areas with concentrations of population, those in rural areas are largely reliant on the sports opportunities offered by local clubs and organisations. Although possible funding accessed via A4A is relatively small, it was generally felt that it can make a big difference to small rural organisations such as village hall committees and clubs.

A rural development fieldworker, who felt involved as a partner working with the *A4A* set-up, noted that local groups would often say, "Just give us the money – why do we have to do all these things [in the application]". However, she explains that "it's a good discipline for them to work through a developmental process". Other development officers commented on the importance of development planning not only in producing an application that is successful, but also in terms of ensuring the successful implementation of schemes.

Sports organisations in rural areas in particular may be small in size and keeping their heads above water through the efforts of a few dedicated volunteers/officials. One Sport England officer pointed out that *A4A* keeps many of them going and the development process of applying helps tighten up the club's administrative structures. For these small organisations the payment procedures operated by different funding agencies can be problematic, especially when applying for different sets of grant awards since they need to work out payment schedules. "An up front award makes a hell of a difference. They [rural organisation] think 'Oh gosh, we can do this' [project]" (community fieldworker).

The concern of one of the partner organisations is that the scheme is probably reaching 'more of the same' (those organisations used to applying for grants) and that those rural groups most in need do not apply. The harder to reach are thought to lack the capacity to fill out applications and still find the whole process daunting. The Regional Director of Sport England considered that, "those benefiting are urban schemes where there is significant [sports] development capacity. Rural areas generally lack such people skills [in compiling

applications]." He went on to note that, "There is enough intervention occurring to say it's a successful scheme but priority groups still find it difficult to access".

Location, accessibility and mobility continually reappear as problems in rural provision for populations scattered across a large, rural isolated area. However, important though transport issues are in such circumstances, the costs of transport are ineligible under *A4A* funding. These difficulties are exacerbated as standards improve and individuals and teams have to look beyond the region for competition. As one sports development officer pointed out, this is a problem that is particularly acute for emerging sports like women's rugby.

Although quality of life is difficult to measure, there is a feeling that this link is being achieved: "Yes I think so, especially in rural areas. It gives a boost to the groups involved." (rural development worker). One local club representative commented in a similar vein that it had been a useful device for improving activity and morale in their local area, which had been affected badly by the foot and mouth outbreak. Success in achieving an award can have a significant impact: "It gives people confidence. They don't think it's possible to get things in rural areas".

> "It's especially important in rural areas because there isn't the same level of local funding on the ground which there used to be. Government funding agencies like the RDA tend to be quite focussed on promoting bigger causes like more jobs created, etc." (rural development worker)

> "It's the best thing ever: small grants that have a good effect. These are far more important than big [capital] grants. Our applicant clubs out there in the sticks are supported by our regional sports officers and Active Sports co-ordinators locally … more of the same please!" (regional sports-specific development officer)

3.6   Around the Fringes

There is no doubt that *A4A* has been able to extend access to those within the stated priority groups, and to some who may previously have been considered hard to reach, but there are still others who remain beyond that reach. There are still many among community groups and sports organisations (both volunteers and professionals) untouched by *A4A*, even among well-established forums. The extent of this was revealed by our group discussions with members of district and regional sports federations (arguably the core of sports organisations), the majority of whom had not even heard of *A4A*.

In a sense all the previous groups could be considered 'hard to reach' in sporting terms – that is why they have been identified for special attention. However, the projects visited in the field and respondents to the postal questionnaire were all successful applicants. We were keen to engage with the kind of groups who are on the fringes of such institutional systems and not getting access to the resources available, or who may not yet even be formally constituted. People such as this provide an even harder test of the efforts to extend the reach of *A4A*. Whereas the previous parts of this section offer plaudits for *A4A* in dealing with grant recipients and servicing them, the comments relating to these currently peripheral groups are more critical.

Any system that identifies some priority groups excludes others. For example, our respondents cited the disadvantage experienced by (amongst others) the over fifties, gays, lesbians, travellers and refugees, who are not all specifically addressed by the scheme within the regions we investigated. *A4A* and Sport England staff are mindful that they do not want to raise expectations too high for what is already an over-subscribed initiative. But the scheme can certainly be encouraged to work harder and smarter to benefit those who at this point remain excluded.

National (even regional) agencies are necessarily limited in what they can do to address such groups. They lack the local knowledge and access to networks, have responsibility for promoting many other initiatives and have to seek some trans-regional consistency (in addition Sport England staff resources are being reduced). Both *A4A* and Sport England staff agree that there should be more local authority and voluntary sector involvement in the delivery of the scheme at community level using established networks. Clearly marginal groups are more likely to receive an award if their local authority has a strategy to target both these groups and A4A funding. Those operating with the delivery of the scheme at local level wanted greater decentralisation of the scheme. They saw consequent advantages in prioritising, targeting and scrutiny. Some pointed out that because many of the hardest to reach (HTR) groups are quite ephemeral, Sport England cannot access them directly, whereas other agencies can.

> "How can Sport England develop local knowledge? It can't. There's too much centralised knowledge and not enough participation of local professionals in the decision making process."

A manager felt that "Sport England sees *A4A* as a panacea and doesn't really understand the real issues". This was associated in the mind of a national sports development manager with the need for *A4A* partners to develop a better understanding of community priorities so that they could relate to the needs of the community rather than the structure of the scheme:

> "…needs change, issues change... it's not sport development, and it's not within a sports development structure… barriers are there in a mainstream structured approach – it needs more flexibility. The most disadvantaged don't have the capacity for organisation and project management. They haven't had the opportunity to write constitutions and open back accounts… There are policies which want to reach out to excluded groups, but some groups don't want to be part of the mainstream, or don't have the means to conform to organisational requirements".

It was in relation to such groups that some suggested awards of less than £500 (see chapter 3) with even fewer strings attached. Many felt that the hardest to reach often needed the support of a 'host organisation', but that currently this could invalidate their application. Local authorities are not allowed to be in receipt of funds, and other organisations with (not so) large turnovers are not afforded priority, so attributes that might ensure financial probity serve to exclude.

Sport Action Zones (SAZs) operate in areas of special need, but there were mixed views about the significance they might have in relation to the *A4A* applications. One national development manager felt that SAZ status is important to target small areas, to get a good feel

of an area, to consult, and to use and exploit local knowledge. A senior sport development officer believed that SAZ status:

> "will increase the number of applications coming to *A4A* because of the impetus and resource that the SAZ will create. The status alone may increase the success rate of the bids but I think that is only subject to the bids being of the right quality."

Some felt SAZ support offered a sort of 'seal of approval' for applications. There was a concern that Sport England itself is not as good in recognising and responding to community needs as some of its programmes purport to be: "Organisational change in Sport England needs to take place to support SAZ work. Sport England is playing catch-up – talk, talk, but not walk, walk".

Gaps in awareness identified earlier in the chapter are emphasised here. For example, an inner city Asian cricket team have to share (to them unaffordable) safety helmets, completely oblivious to the scheme, and unaware of their eligibility. This in itself is exclusion from access. The marketing and promotion of the award are therefore a significant issue, but some were clearly responding to an outdated impression of the *A4A* scheme, criticising it for its emphasis on sport rather than the excluded. Many agree with the community worker who said the "physical activity term is more appropriate because it's more inclusive". Those professionals who recognise the scope of *A4A* find it suitable for accommodating the needs of community groups that cannot be readily compartmentalised. It is a major advantage that the bid does not have to be pre-assigned as sport or art or heritage. Those still working with a more restrictive sports understanding of *A4A* are unable to realise its full potential. Certainly there is a perception among some that community groups have not got the broader message, but that at the same time *A4A* works better for sports clubs than for community based organisations. A national sports development manager asks, "Is the programme to support those already in the system or to address bigger issues that sport could address?" He then went on to insist that regional offices should ask how sport fits into the 'social cohesion agenda'.

From a consultant engaged by Sport England, to sports development workers, to community worker there was a common plea for a more 'bottom-up' approach if these currently peripheral groups are to be engaged. One manager argued for a community needs approach as "the only way to work if you really want to make a difference to those hardest to reach. By definition they are alienated already from existing organisational policies and practices." Community workers emphasised the need to raise awareness as HTR groups are not part of the 'usual networks', and many would prefer face-to-face support to help with applications and to demonstrate how to meet the criteria. It was suggested that promotion should be directly targeted to youthworkers, community centres, resource centres, community elders and leaders. Each grouping though had its own list, and clearly *A4A* needs other umbrella organisations as partners to fulfil this challenge.

Once the information has been communicated there are still issues to deal with. A physical activity co-ordinator describes issues and barriers like the lack of "co-cultural"[1] information, language, lack of cultural awareness, and states that the conditions should be loosened as they fail to work for non-established groups. The light touch valued by the other groups is seen to

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[1] Thought of as being rid of jargon and culturally empathetic.

be equally important here, but there were calls for even more "flexibility and human touch". A support worker describes how a women's keep fit group do not think they are eligible because they think that £500 is a lot of money (unlike sports clubs). That means, in their eyes, that they would have to get tied-up in all sorts of bureaucracy to get the funding and they cannot understand why anyone would give **them** money. They have not yet got to the stage where they have the confidence to present what they do as worthwhile.

In relation to these (incipient) groups there are mixed views about the two conditions of having to have a bank account and a constitution. Some are in favour, believing that they offer opportunities to develop, to change, to overcome a lack of trust, and as a means towards capacity building. A national development manager pointed out that HTR groups may initially be seen as weak applicants, but the challenge is to develop them to be in a better position to apply for public funds after working with them on a project. He felt the focus of *A4A* could shift beyond participation and be more innovative in addressing pre-participation, community development and forming groups. *A4A* might help the HTR to become organisations. Others believed that the conditions are no problem if another agency can act as 'host' (although some would expect to be paid). Many agencies assist groups that are not already constituted or put them in touch with someone like the Community Voluntary Service who will draft a constitution with them free of charge. However, a senior sports development worker says the word 'constitution' puts some people off. He offers a 'dummy' constitution, but this is sometimes still not understood.

Some HTR groups do not want to be formalised, or feel that the conditions are 'too much hassle'. They might decline the opportunity for money, as they simply do not want to be bound by a constitution. An *A4A* officer felt that the conditions may be problematic for embryonic groups and noted anecdotal concern that the need for a constitution might be rejected by some BME groups as "imposing a WASP culture". Most agree with the community workers who believe the conditions are comparatively easy for professionals, and well-established sports organisations, but unreasonable for small informal groups, and can actually act as a barrier. Arguing a particular case, a youthworker felt that the conditions should be "loosened a bit", pointing out that some, like those with learning disabilities, do not understand a constitution.

Sport England officers recognise that a good application technique is needed: "It's about form filling competence". Although assistance is often available, there are many HTR groups who are still daunted by the prospect of completing the forms and others who do not recognise that they need assistance in completing them. These latter groups often conveyed no awareness of the complexity of composing a successful application, or of the policy process, or of the language or terminology likely to engage the attention of funders. Literary and political competence are precursors to achieving a successful application, and HTR groups are often at a disadvantage which might obscure their genuine eligibility and need.

3.7   Overview

In the eyes of those interviewed, the *A4A* scheme appears to have extended the reach of funding further than any previous similar national initiative. It has undoubtedly succeeded in accessing previously hard to reach groups. In that sense it has been inclusive, but the challenge for the *A4A* scheme is to continue to extend its reach, improve its effectiveness, and

increase its inclusion. To achieve this will require a more coherent effort engaging a range of agencies in more localised fieldwork. The implication may be a need for increased funding for what could continue to be the most successful national community sports inclusion initiative there is.

> "Scheme priorities are 'spot on'. Also assists with social cohesion. Some club members live in institutions and it allows them to mix in a new environment." (disability club rep)

> "I felt chuffed to bits really. It was the first time I had applied for something and I was successful in getting it. I felt like I had achieved something. It was great." (club volunteer)
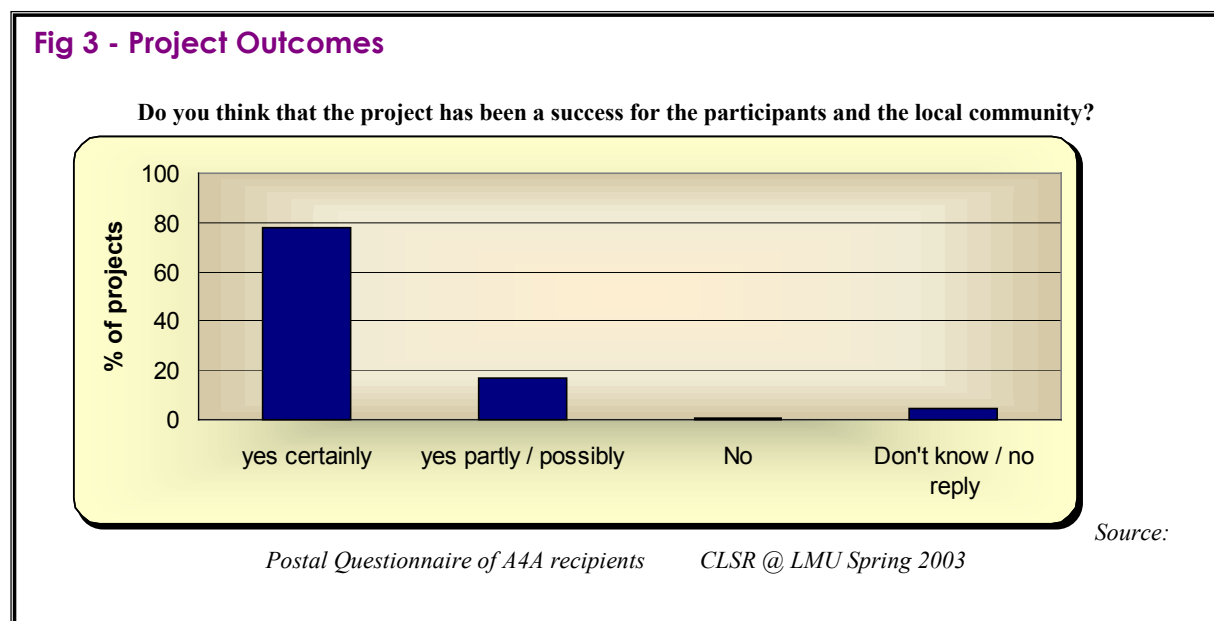
Recurring Themes

- Awareness of *A4A* through the usual sporting channels is generally thought to be good, indeed so good that some regions have stopped their promotional activities. Awareness of the scheme could still be greater. This was particularly the case among those we encountered on the fringes of the system. There is a need to transcend the sporting networks and utilise community networks.

- Money is being directed to groups that would not otherwise have received any.

- The popularity of the scheme has created an excess of demand before the hardest to reach groups have been able to benefit. So greater levels of funding are now required, both to provide the support mechanisms and training needed to make sure that priority groups are fully included and to meet the increased demand their actions will precipitate.

- There was concern that some think of funding as a right and need to be encouraged to see it in terms of securing sports development goals.

- Among peripheral groups there remain problems in engaging with the system. Making the first step is fraught with problems for groups who do not naturally access 'mainstream' methods of support. Reasons for this reluctance range from pre-conceived ideas about chances of success to simple fear of filling in the forms. While most understand the need for the *A4A* conditions, the requirement for a constitution and bank account may deter the very people who are hardest to reach.

- Most of the professionals consider the application process straightforward, but some of the (potential) applicants think otherwise. Making a successful application is dependent upon the skills available, so training and support are necessary. The latter may take the form of templates for constitutions and advice on setting-up a bank account, as well as guidance on framing the application.

- Among groups previously outside the funding system the success of some encourages others to apply.

- Despite concerns (and some examples) that the projects might just represent 'more of the same', there is considerable confidence that new groups and new ideas are being supported, thereby extending opportunity.

- Some fear that schemes have been approved which are not centrally addressing the priority groups (e.g. women, minority ethnic groups, disabled) claimed. The grants management system operated by *A4A* needs to be sufficiently robust to inform the original decision and service continued monitoring, allowing partners to play a role when appropriate.

- The outcome for recipients of grants has been a confidence boost that in itself supports the sustainability of groups in these priority communities. On the other hand, while some agreed that opportunities had been increased they were not persuaded that these were necessarily sustainable after the end of the *A4A* funding.

- *A4A* is helping sport to operate within integration / cross-cultural / cross-policy agendas.

4 Project Outcomes

4.1 General Impact

Projects might be considered to improve the quality of life insofar as they offer more opportunities … that are enjoyable … that provide additional benefits through socialising, making people feel better about themselves and others, reducing crime, increasing learning and improving health.
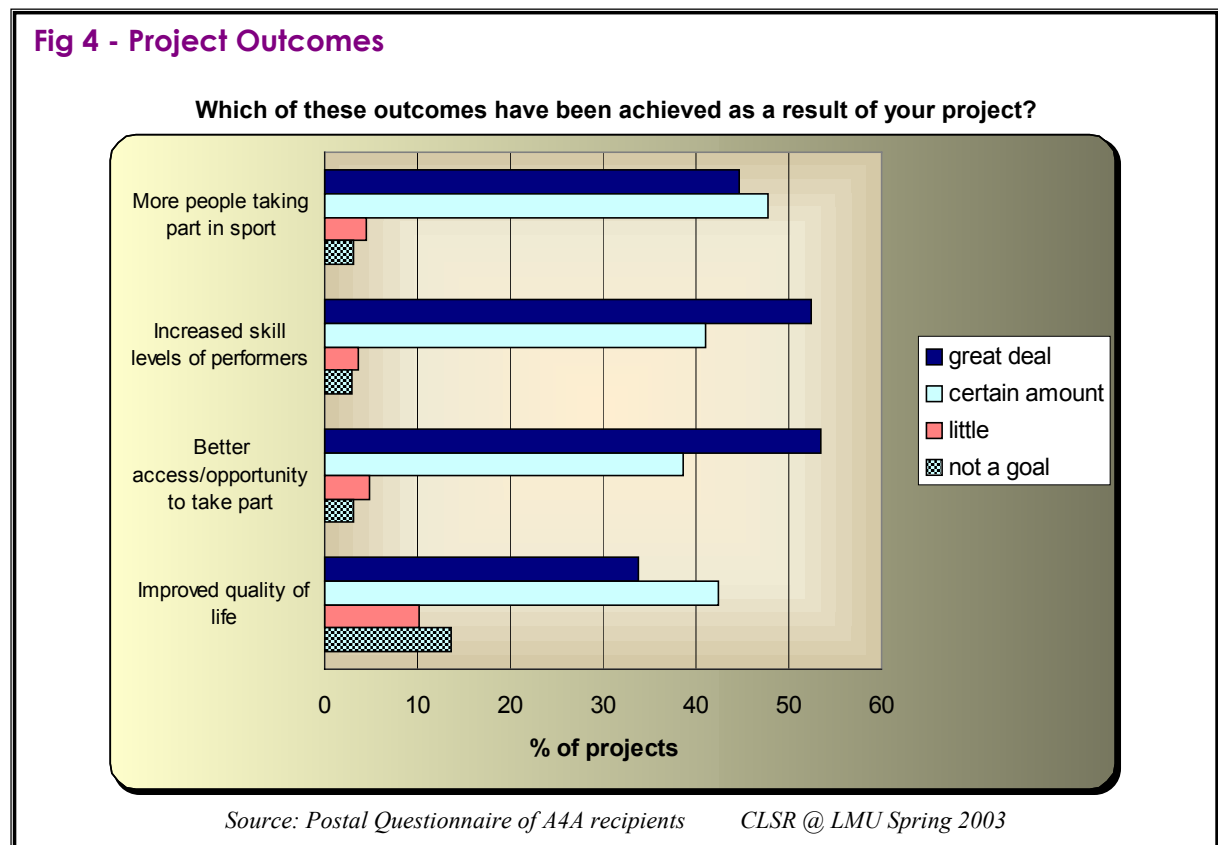
With few exceptions, our case studies were extremely pleased with what they have been able to achieve as a result of receiving *A4A* funding. The initiatives undertaken are diverse and appear, to some extent or other, to be 'hitting the spot' in terms of Sport England's regional priorities. Certainly a large majority of respondents to our survey (78%) felt that the *A4A* funded projects had been a success for participants and the local community (*Fig 3*). Both Sport England and *A4A* regional staff are also very positive about the achievements of *A4A*. They see it as reaching 'very wide and deep', with the criteria being met. But officers also concede there is more to be done. Sport England staff say there are definitely lots of new **applicants**, but "no evidence one way or the other to say that new **participants** are benefiting".

Fig 3 - Project Outcomes

Do you think that the project has been a success for the participants and the local community?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Current measures of direct impact are the number of awards and the amount of money spent. Whether or not the aims are met is recorded using a coding process with the majority of projects accorded three aims. However, some community workers suggest that sometimes projects quite validly turn out to be something quite different from originally intended (which can then raise a funding issue).

Only 9% of the projects responding in the postal survey did not take place as originally intended. The main changes were that the programme eventually contained different activities (30% of those that were changed), a smaller range of activities (12%), or a wider range of activities or extended programme (17%). The changes did not appear to have been caused by any particular aspect of the application process.

It is harder to measure indirect impact. *A4A* teams receive additional letters and other materials, but these are not measured in any formal way. *A4A* staff concede that there is no attempt to measure community development or quality of life, i.e. the 'wider' benefits to the community, and there are real concerns about how this can actually be done in practice. Nevertheless, three quarters (76%), subscribed to the idea that it had 'improved the quality of life' of the participants (*Fig 4*). As can also be seen from Fig 4, even larger proportions believed the project had contributed to more people taking part in sport (92%), increasing skill levels of performers (94%), and providing better access to opportunities to take part in sport (92%).

Fig 4 - Project Outcomes

Which of these outcomes have been achieved as a result of your project?

Legend:
- great deal
- certain amount
- little
- not a goal

Categories (y-axis):
- More people taking part in sport
- Increased skill levels of performers
- Better access/opportunity to take part
- Improved quality of life

x-axis: **% of projects** (0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60)

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

4.2   *Increasing participation*

> "Generally, *A4A* has achieved what it set out to do – small groups, start-up costs etc. It should not be looked at as a major fund for new facilities, etc., but has made a significant impact in terms of new clubs, equipment, junior sections etc." (Sport England officer)

However, partner organisations such as EFDS and others were unable to identify clearly whether participation rates were being increased. Some commented that the current 'tick-box' monitoring process did not supply them with the information they needed to make meaningful conclusions about *A4A*'s impact on participation, beyond the notion that there is 'generally more sporting activity' because of the scheme.

The applicant organisations and participants interviewed were far more positive about participation outcomes with some reporting tangible increases in playing strength. Significant numbers of girls had joined a women's football club, with 86 playing at the time of the interview, and expected to rise to over 100 by the end of the year, while a cricket club reported a continuous flow of new players as a result of their project. In a similar vein, a netball club has been able to set up an outreach group based several miles from the club's base, which it is hoped will eventually feed players into the mainstream club.

On the evidence of our postal survey, two thirds of projects have been catering for under 13 boys (68%) and girls (64%). As can be seen from Fig 5, smaller proportions of projects address successively older age groups until only a smaller minority provide opportunities for retired people. Throughout the age range more projects have been directed to males than females, an imbalance that becomes much more pronounced when the number of people involved is taken into account (*Fig 6*). Although only a small number of projects have been specifically for disabled people or people from minority ethnic groups, both have been able to benefit from more projects than the retired.

An Asian youth group reported a doubling of their membership, "We started with 15 but are now up to 30 and still growing". A small canoe club in a rural location now has 30 members (10 of whom are juniors), representing an increase of around 12, as well as increasing its family membership by 2 or 3 whole families plus part-families (lads and dads). Retention of new members is an issue, however, and the club is unsure how many will stay with them long-term. This is illustrated in the case of an archery club that attracted 10 new members of whom only 1 or 2 subsequently stayed. The club uses its *A4A* funded equipment to run have-a-go sessions at local fairs and fetes, providing the opportunity for people to try archery and "to have fun without joining a club – it's too expensive to find out [later] you don't like it". Club personnel are happy to provide an enjoyable experience in the hope that a proportion of the 'have-a-goers' will join the club later.
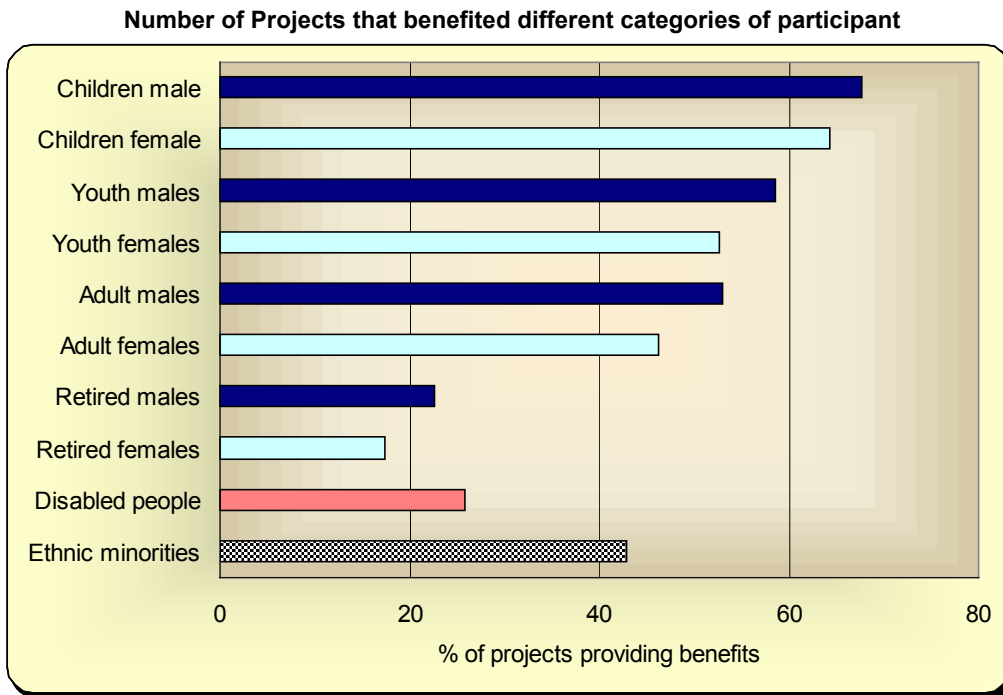
In attracting previous non-participants into sport, the scheme can clearly be a catalyst for personal development, especially in those from previously under-represented groups. Despite considering that the achievement of scheme targets is essentially a subjective assessment, an EFDS development officer noted that the formation of new clubs and new activities has contributed to improved social interaction, independent living and empowerment. As a consequence:

> "People who have put their toe in the water have gone on to take part in other activities, roles in the club or further applications to other bodies. Being successful is very important at this level because initially groups would not apply for fear of failure."
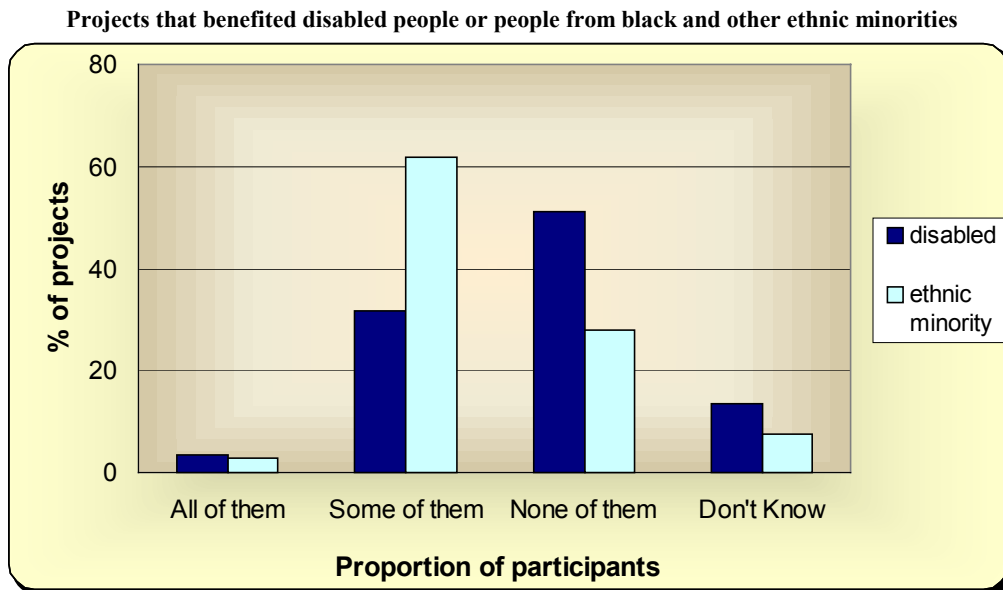
This was a view supported by participants:

"It [project] enables people who would otherwise be isolated to have a goal, e.g. a 16 year old in a segregated special school has improved in his confidence. It boosts self-confidence and fitness and makes you proud to have achieved something."

Fig 5 - The Participants

Number of Projects that benefited different categories of participant

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Projects that benefited disabled people or people from black and other ethnic minorities

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Similarly, two blind bowls players comment:

> "I'm over the moon about it. It's given me the confidence to come here [indoor bowling centre] and have a go. I probably wouldn't have done any other sport".

> "It's changed my life. I just came to make up numbers – I didn't go out much [before]."

By taking the number of beneficiaries identified by the replies to the survey, we can extrapolate the figures to provide an estimate of the total number of beneficiaries from the *A4A* sports awards from the start of the scheme until December 2002 (*Fig 6*).


Fig 6 - Total Number of A4A Beneficiaries

Extrapolated total number of people benefiting as a result of an A4A sport grant to Dec 2002

	Male	Female	Total	Disabled*	B&OEM*
Children (under 13)	898,404	620,261	1,518,664		
Young People (age 13-19)	649,858	349,241	999,099		
Adults of work age	341,466	159,690	501,156		
Retired people	143,080	95,372	238,452		
Totals	2,032,808	1,224,564	3,257,372	66,526*	196,001*

* - these figures are included in the figures shown for male, female and totals

Extrapolated number of beneficiaries from A4A Sports grants to December 2002
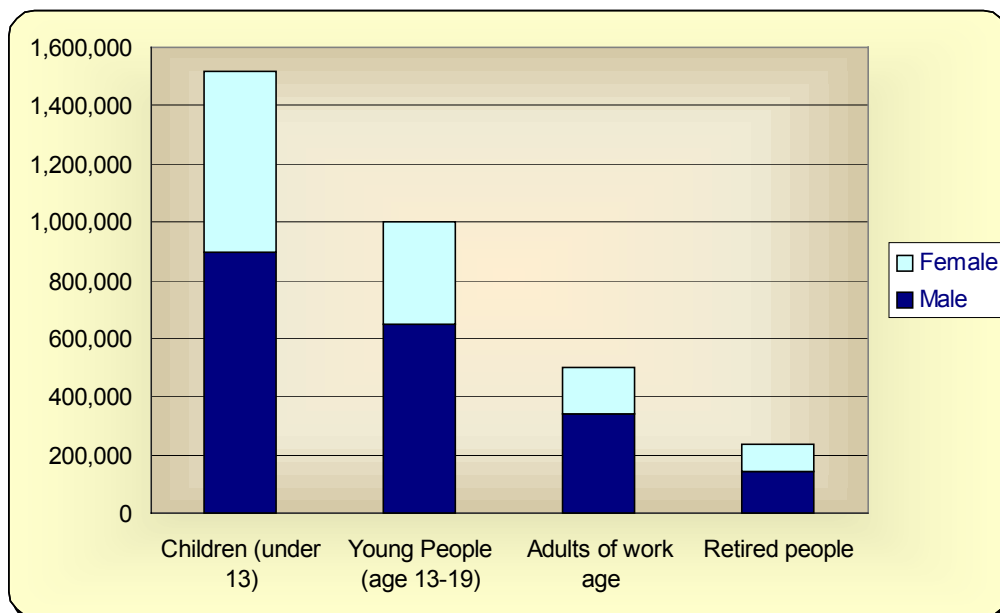
Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

4.3   Improving skill levels

Again, although *A4A* scheme partners find it difficult to explicitly quantify outcomes in terms of skill improvement, participants (whether they knew about the *A4A* funding source or not) are predominantly positive about their new skill levels, access to better equipment and further opportunities. "I would never have thought of doing water-skiing, and I've since [the project] had a couple of weekends away … and introduced other people to it."

Gains in self-development do not necessarily relate only to improved personal activity skills. Projects can also help in encouraging individuals to play a more active role as volunteers. A new member of a wheelchair basketball club (who was not a regular sports participant before) has now taken on the role of marketing and promotions officer and is taking a level 1 coaching award which will in turn contribute to the sustainability of the activity. A participant from another project says, "If they need extra funding and I've got extra time … there'll be nothing stopping me from helping out".

Many groups have channelled funds into increasing the skills of their own volunteers as coaches. Results are evident in either increases in demand for an activity or increased performance levels in competition. A gym club has been able to address the high demand for gymnastics for girls in the area as a consequence of having more coaches at a higher level. Another girls'/women's club has seen the performances of teams at different levels improve, and girls invited for national trials have given a better account of themselves. This is due in part to having more and better coaches available from within the club, but also because they have been able to afford to employ a specialist fitness trainer. Their outreach session has been run voluntarily by newly qualified coaches, whose training was paid for by *A4A*.

Similarly, a basketball club for disabled people has been able to improve the skills of its existing coaches and to encourage some members to take coaching courses. The purchase of specialised wheelchairs has resulted in improvements in team performance by increasing the mobility of players on-court. Two other clubs, as a direct result of either employing external coaches or having parents volunteer to undertake coaching awards, had also witnessed positive outcomes on the field of play. *A4A* funding has increased competitive aspirations in several cases, evidenced by the canoe club that has further developed its canoe polo activities and the pony club which has extended its participation in competitive tetrathlon events. Overall, local groups and clubs are experiencing greatly enhanced skill bases in both playing and coaching.

The participants in these new activities confirmed the increase in skill levels, citing numerous examples. Several individuals reported that this was their first experience with 'proper' coaches and observed the impact on their standard of performance. Mothers of some younger girl footballers commented that the project improved the footballing skills and fitness levels of those taking part, but that their daughters' social skills were also improving. A player/coach reported that, having completed the Level 1 coaching award, she is now in pursuit of Level 2, and consequently enjoying her coaching more and treating it more professionally.

4.4   Quality of life

Almost without exception there was a feeling from interviewees that *A4A* makes a meaningful contribution to the quality of life, including that of some 'excluded' communities. However, none are able to quantify this given the undefined nature of the concept and the doubts expressed about how to measure it.   Nevertheless, insofar as this represents new, additional activity for the participants it will certainly increase social capital as measured in the General Household Survey.   And following Putnam (2000) an increase in social capital will result in a net increase in quality of life.

The assessment of improvements to the quality of life is especially problematic, and respondents found it difficult to even describe consistently.   One Sport England Regional Director defined it as:

> "Community vibrancy: people being socially in contact with each other. I see it as the mortar that binds the fragmenting bits of very small organisations together. Without A4A, a lot more would have bitten the dust."

Some applicants made direct reference to improvements (wider than increases in participation or levels of skill) experienced in communities as a result of *A4A* funded activities.   These included healthier lifestyles, more parental involvement with their children, attempts at improving school attendance, more 'disciplined' behaviour by youngsters, improved confidence and, for some children, an escape from an "inadequate" home life.   The gym club mentioned above felt that the new activity had assisted girls with their discipline, building friendships, building confidence and improving health and fitness levels.   Another girls' project has seen more parents becoming involved, including one mother who runs a 'shop' to enable the girls, many of whom are from deprived backgrounds, to purchase affordable kit.

Others, while finding it difficult to quantify impact on quality of life directly, feel that their 'improved' (as a result of funding) organisations make a positive contribution to the wider community, including helping to alleviate deprivation.   For instance, one local group representative believes that young people's improvements in health and fitness, along with the channelling of their energies into a positive environment, will certainly have some long-term benefits for the community, no matter how small.   Representatives of an Asian youth club are positive that they are attracting young people who may otherwise have 'strayed' into socially unacceptable behaviour.   Black and ethnic minority projects in Yorkshire also commented on the impact of their projects: "Working with BEMSport and the Caribbean club is improving community relations".   Small communities need the cohesion these groups or clubs are providing, often by just 'staying in business' and giving local people activities to do. Whilst these improvements to quality of life affect only a small number of people in each case, they are tangible changes brought about as a result of a relatively small financial injection.

5. Organisational Outcomes

"I don't think there is any real assessment of [organisational] impact" (*A4A* officer). It is difficult to assess long-term effect/impact at a local level beyond those organisations who have made more than one application and developmental progress is then evident to *A4A* officers. One Sport England officer was relaxed about this lack of outcome measurement, believing that the scheme offered "An opportunity to have faith in human beings: there's too much suspicion. It's rewarding local community voluntary work." The majority of Sport England staff did not concur with this view, however, believing that the lack of outcome measurement is a real shortfall of the scheme as without it there can be no realistic assessment of impact.

5.1   Increasing capacity

Several interviewees stressed the organisational gains associated with making an application for funding. An *A4A* officer explained that, "Part of the project-building process is the completion of the application form itself, i.e. group participation and ownership". This is echoed in the view of a manager of a Sports Action Zone who describes the process as being just as important as receiving the award, as an incentive to plan: "*A4A* is definitely not just an end in itself, but a means to an end as well". This individual believes that there is an identified need for community development projects with a sport and physical activity element, and that community based organisations and local sports clubs are both building capacity for community development. An SDO concurs: "The programme acts as a stepping stone to bring community groups together, to engage in existing mainstream structures within sport". Similarly, a Sport England Regional Director describes the benefits of the project planning process: "*A4A* has a high return in sports development terms, i.e. in the way local authorities get involved with projects". It also has the effect of raising expectations according to a consultant employed by Sport England, who observes that those groups which succeed value this success and aspire to go further: "they want more of it… ask what else is there ... they are empowered, which increases their status and self-esteem".
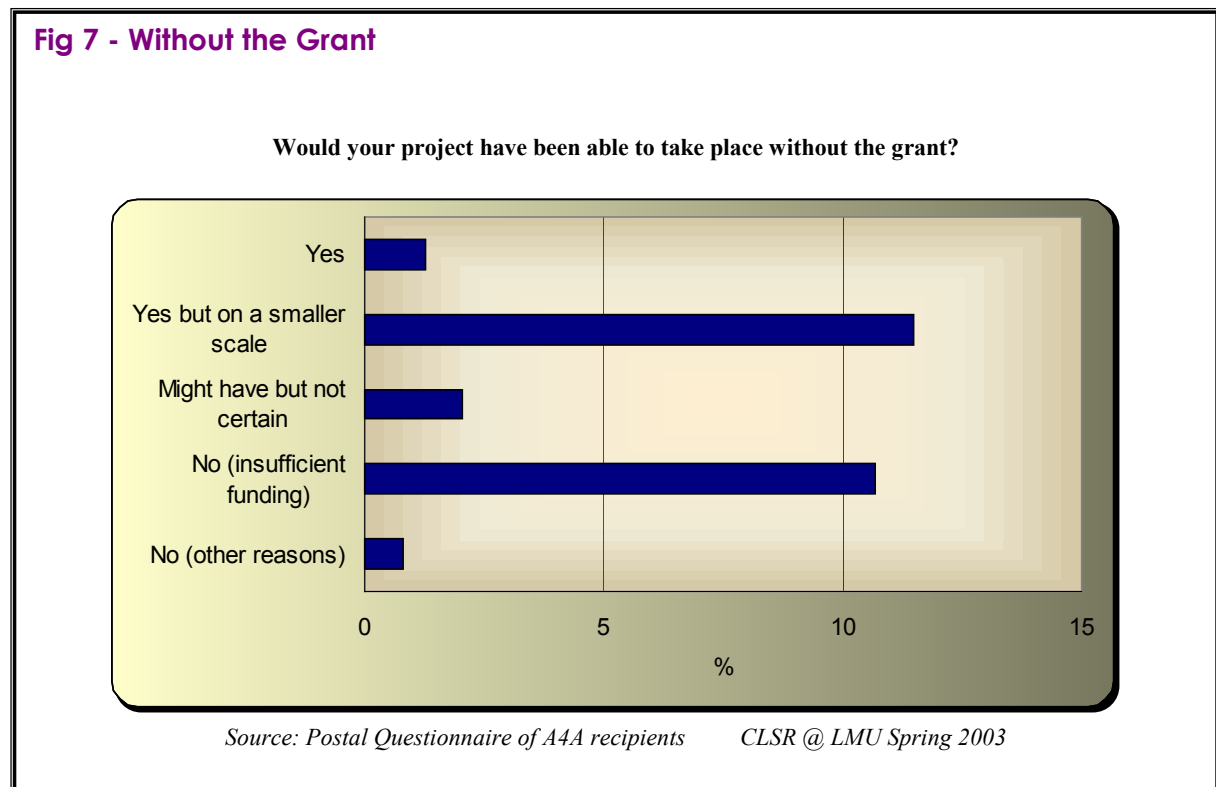
However, the scheme cannot be viewed as a catalyst for organisational change in every case, given the number of one-off projects or projects which are part of the existing core programmes of particular organisations. In the case of well-established organisations it may not serve to increase capacity per se: "You know the organisation can always apply to *A4A* – people see it as an easy access source [of money]" (ex 'lay' member of a JRC).

Nevertheless, *A4A* can be key to change in some of the newer organisations, by formalising their structures or taking them through a developmental process they have not considered before. It can be a key factor in giving them the confidence that they have the skill and expertise to put a project into place. "*Awards for All* made the club what it is and allowed us to start with confidence – it has just mushroomed from there". Forward planning is also enhanced. Several community groups/clubs report that they have been sufficiently encouraged to think about future projects. Moreover, most of the case studies report that their project would either not have happened at all or would have been significantly delayed without the *A4A* grant, which gives some measure of the scheme's impact. Only 13% of questionnaire respondents indicated that they thought their project would or might have gone

ahead without the *Awards for All* grant (and most of them indicated that it would have been in a weaker form (*Fig 7*)).
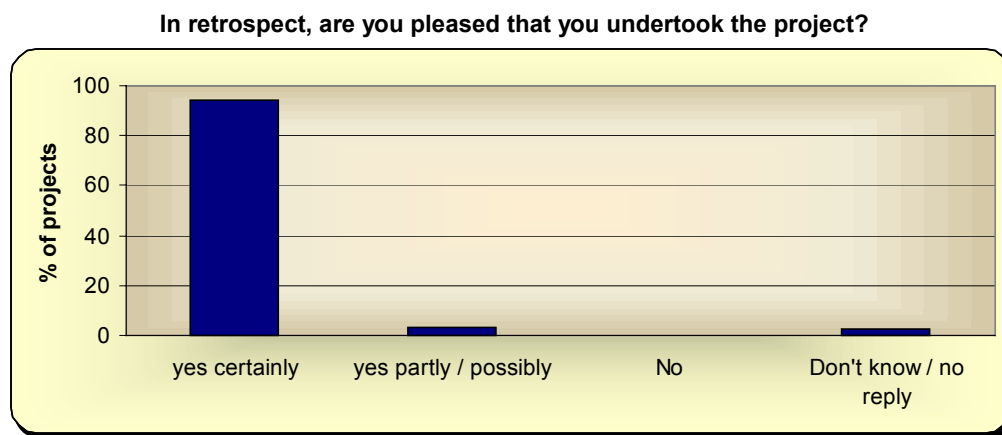
"A lot of factors make the club operate, but the *A4A* scheme has been a very useful catalyst."

"Without the award we would still not be able to do it [activity] and we would be tottering along."

Fig 7 - Without the Grant

Would your project have been able to take place without the grant?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003
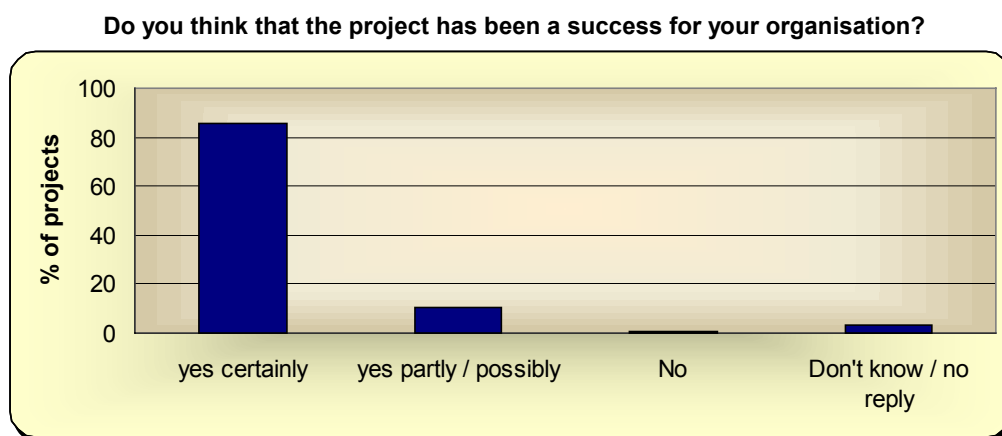
Only 2 respondents indicated that they were sorry that they had taken part in the programme; while 94% said they were pleased they had participated. Moreover, less than 1% of respondents felt the programme had any detrimental effect on their organisation, whereas 86% considered it to have been beneficial to the organisation. Beyond that, over three-quarters (78%) believed the project to have benefited the participants and the local community (*Fig 8*).

Fig 8 - Overall View of the Project

In retrospect, are you pleased that you undertook the project?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Do you think that the project has been a success for your organisation?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Increased organisational confidence was reported by several groups. This arises from more individuals being involved in leadership roles and the groups therefore being able to plan for the future with more confidence. Many are now able to call upon a number of people from within to lead on future bids to *A4A* and elsewhere. A women's club feel they are now more organised in their approach, evidenced in the fact that they are conducting risk assessment, financial management, child protection procedures, etc., to a far greater extent and quality than before: "It's turned us from a club into a professional club". Skill levels may thus be enhanced among volunteers involved in organising projects. The representatives of a newly formed Asian youth club consider that *A4A* has given the club fresh impetus: "We wish we had applied for more, but we were not sure we would get it. We would like to go on and buy our own facilities … It's given confidence to the leaders to do more and apply for other money." This subsequent willingness to apply for further funding is itself a measure of organisational confidence.

Questionnaire returns show the numbers of local groups that have already applied for further funding since receiving an *A4A* award (*Table 4*). Some 10% had applied again to *A4A* and a similar proportion to a charity and even more to a local authority (15%). A large majority (91%) of survey respondents said they would like to do the same thing again in the future

(*Fig 9*). Two thirds (65%) would certainly be prepared to apply for another *Awards for All* grant while only 1% indicated that they would certainly not be applying again.
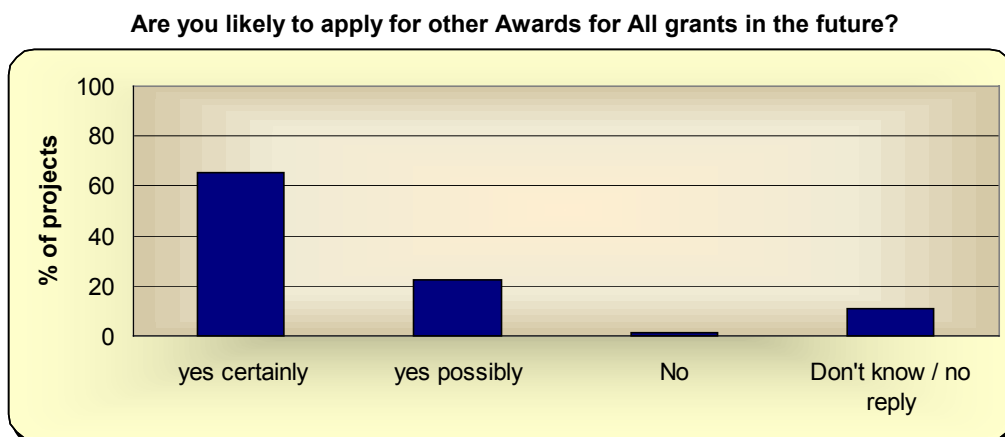
Table 4: other grants applied for since A4A award		
Agency applied to	*% applying*	*% successful*
A4A	10	7
Other National Lottery grant	3	2
Charities	10	7
Sport England	3	2
Local Authority	15	11

Other case study groups reported examples of the personal development of individuals within their organisations who, as a result of their experiences in putting together *A4A* projects, have been empowered to do more. A canoe club secretary is now involved in a local sports forum promoting *A4A* and other funding, as well as producing a newsletter and information for a far-flung rural community. Within another club, members are trying to share out organisational duties. For example, one interviewee has just taken over organising the teams for a weekly league. Now more confident in general she is very positive about becoming involved in future projects.

Fig 9 - The Future

Given the opportunity, would you do it again?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Are you likely to apply for other Awards for All grants in the future?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Other examples of increased organisational capacity can be seen in the plans that groups have for extended programmes in the future. For example, a football club is considering diversification into other sports, with foreign trips and other more ambitious projects under discussion as a result of the *A4A* experience.

For others, however, it should also be remembered that success in gaining funding can sometimes have a negative organisational impact, when developments create added pressure on already stretched volunteers. The chairperson of one club for people with disabilities noted: "It's great to get the train rolling, but you then have to keep it rolling … once you've created the beast, you've got to keep feeding it". Another club representative complained that, with committee membership dwindling and a few individuals left to 'carry the can', "If I end up doing all the paperwork for this group and I'm working, I might not be able to do the activities". For some, increased capacity may be difficult to achieve until and unless more volunteers are identified. There is also a level of frustration from some community organisations that the scheme will only support new activities. They feel that ongoing schemes can still justify repeat funding and are worthy of support on this basis, i.e. having gone through a start-up phase they now have a successful project which needs further support in order to make it sustainable.

5.2   Sustainability

Organisational impact is also difficult to measure because projects may either be still ongoing or respondents find it difficult to summarise its effects. Some partner organisations were concerned about projects that gain funding since they meet regional priorities, but nevertheless may be less developmentally sound than others which fail. Despite scheme aspirations to increase sustainability, one *A4A* officer openly states, "We're not interested in long-term sustainability - only bothered about the 12 month period. We're not bothered if it [the project] stops after that period." While this may not be a representative view, it does reflect the fact that it is particularly difficult either to measure or claim that *A4A* affects long-term sustainability – it may, however, be one step along the way.

> "There has been no longitudinal study, so it's difficult to judge sustainability. A lot [of applications] are first-time projects but there's no measure of whether they stay involved in sport" (Sport England officer).

However, to the extent that they consider a project would not have happened without the *A4A* grant allowing them to purchase equipment and attract new members, community organisations suggest this will help their overall sustainability. Members are the lifeblood of such organisations and most equipment bought will have a lifespan of more than the one year of the project. Equally, people trained as coaches through such projects subsequently become a potential local resource, though there is no indication of how many use those newly acquired skills.

Questionnaire respondents suggested a range of such outcomes as a result of their projects (*Fig 10*). Certainly improved facilities or equipment were commonly identified (79%) but most of the long-term benefits identified were people orientated. More and better staff and new partnerships with others were important benefits. Resultant improved standards and increased membership were themselves seen to be significant for ensuring a better future, and

18% reported an improved awareness of the special requirements of minority groups. Several other benefits were reported, including the establishment of a long-term programme of activities (4%) and the establishment of a new club (2%). Only 2% indicated that there had not been any long-term benefits.

Fig 10 - Long-Term Benefits

Has the Project left any long-term benefits for your organisation?
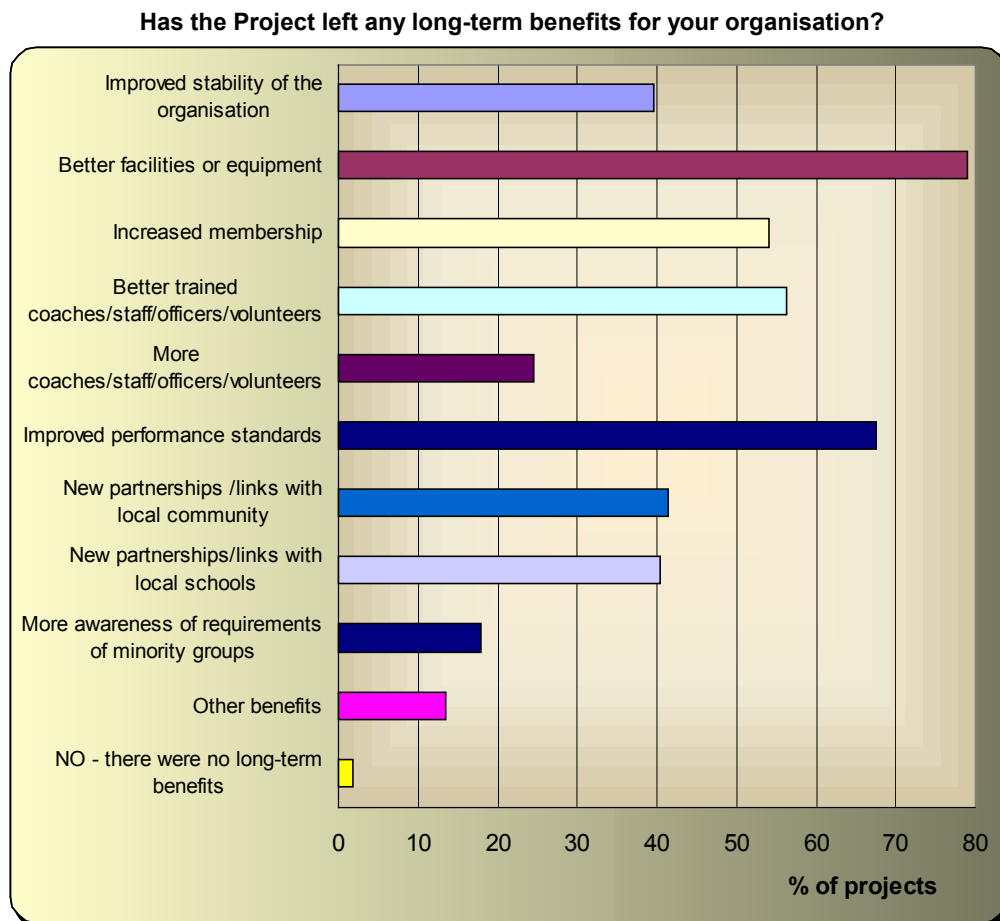
Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

> "Realistically, £5,000 isn't the earth – it is a realistic amount of money and you will only be able to do realistic things with it. I think it keeps it all in order."

Most interviewed groups feel that, while not providing the long term answer in itself, the *A4A* funding has left them in a much stronger position as far as the future is concerned. Existing club members who had taken part in *A4A* funded projects were often positive about what they saw as a logical cycle of events, e.g. better equipment and improved coaching enables enhanced activities, attracting new members and strengthening the core of the club, and contributing to its ongoing success. However, such outcomes were largely aspirational rather than proven, since established organisations found it difficult to ascribe their organisation's ongoing activities directly as an effect of *A4A* and newer ones found it difficult to assess longer term impact.

For others, especially the less established groups, the actual experience of putting a project together and applying for support is as important as the money itself. It has contributed to a heightened understanding of the sports development process, as well as enabling them to make stronger links with key support agencies. It is also useful as a 'leverage tool' in accessing further grants from other agencies. Without thorough assessment measures, however, it is hard to judge whether the sustainability of clubs and other groups is directly influenced by *A4A*. The general feeling is best summed up by the partner agency that states, "*A4A* helps create the conditions in which sustainability can be engendered. Most groups will require further support beyond *A4A* to ensure a sustainable future".

6. Running the Scheme

In considering the operation of the *A4A* sport scheme, we looked at the overall processes underpinning it: how different agencies are involved, how organisations go about applying, how applications are administered, and how reporting procedures operate. Some of these points have already been touched on, but we address them here 'as a piece'.

6.1 Relationships between scheme partners

6.1.1 A4A & Sport England

Perhaps not surprisingly there are regional variations in the opinions *A4A* staff hold about the relationship with Sport England in some regions. In some regions there is a history of collaboration, producing better working liaison than in others. One *A4A* officer commented on a more difficult relationship observing that "sometimes, the distributors forget that they are partners in the programme and not owners". More positively, another *A4A* officer commented favourably on how "Sport England take a very active part in finding out about local schemes". While some maintain such regular contact, others are more 'hands off': contact is generally based on reaction to circumstance when there is a problem with an application.

Sport England liaison officers generally reported that their relationship with *A4A* is positive and productive; while *A4A* assess applications, Sport England adds opinions on the sports portfolio and can challenge sports decisions made by *A4A*. Since the 'joint pot' was introduced, however, Sport England staff have less direct input. Under the previous single distributor portfolio, they could contribute local sports knowledge more easily and therefore had a greater 'influence' on decisions, which they feel helped ensure the quality of successful sports applications.

6.1.2 Relationships between distributors

Sport has a clear advantage over others in having an established and extensive development network through which to promote the scheme and support applications. More projects are therefore generated than for other *A4A* distributors who lack such local networks. As a Sport England Regional Director comments: "Our ten years of investment in a sports development infrastructure is showing returns". This has caused some tension between distributors at national level that is also reflected in some Joint Regional Committees [JRCs] regarding the perceived return on the investment made by each. Heritage projects in particular account for comparatively fewer applications.

6.1.3 Relationships with other 'partner' organisations

The scheme relies on a variety of partners to undertake local delivery support work. Both *A4A* and Sport England staff agree on the value of local authority (LA) and voluntary sector agency involvement in the delivery of the scheme at community level using established networks. Currently, some local authorities have deliberate strategies to assist potential

applicants; others are less proactive. The former consider *A4A* to be a vital contributor to their own aims. Some think of themselves as 'scheme deliverers' rather than partners, e.g. "*A4A* is part of my toolkit". None have direct links with *A4A* but they have well-established links with Sport England, and are generally complimentary about the support the latter provides.

6.2   Awareness & Promotion

An *A4A* officer reported that past attempts by distributors to promote *A4A* jointly had not always worked well. This may be in part the result of insufficient notice of promotional events being given to local groups. Attempts to market the scheme may even have a negative impact on *A4A* staff as, for example, when one distributor, having realised that they are not receiving as many projects as another instigates a promotional blitz, which results in a disproportionate increase in work for the *A4A* team. The *A4A* marketing budget is then used to pay for staff overtime in dealing with new applications. *A4A* officers and Sport England staff no longer attend the variety of promotional events/meetings/county clinics they used to early in the scheme. Now selective in their attendance they concentrate on opportunities to promote *A4A* to targeted priority groups or areas ('targeted marketing'). There is also an attempt to 'manage demand downwards' given the over demand upon the scheme and therefore the amount of rejected applications.

The most effective method of disseminating information about the scheme appears to be the 'grapevine' with 30% indicating that they first heard about *Awards for All* by word of mouth (*Fig 11*). Local authorities are the most effective agencies at introducing Awards for All. 30% first heard of *Awards for All* from their local authority, compared with 13% from Sport England, 10% from their national governing body of sport, 6% from their Awards for All office, and 4% from the media. Despite the information provided on the Internet, less than 1% had discovered *Awards for All* through that medium. None of the project groups interviewed had responded directly to *A4A*/Sport England promotional material.

Fig 11 - Information regarding the Awards for All Scheme

How did you first find out about Awards for All?
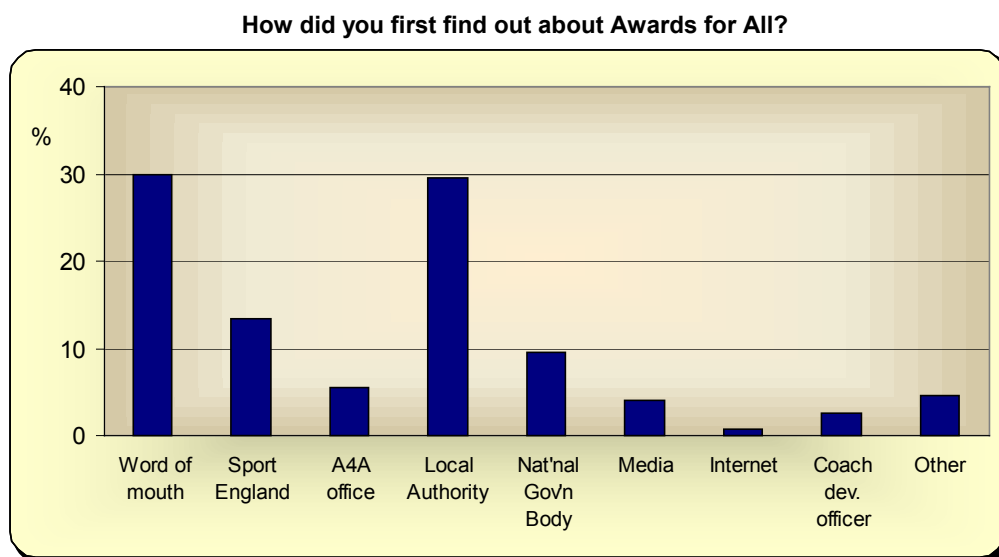
Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Very few of those actually participating in the projects had heard specifically of *A4A*, although there was some general awareness that new activities had been initiated as a consequence of some sort of grant aid having been received.

6.2.1 Special promotional measures

There are several examples of proactive work being carried out to try and reach priority groups. Clifford Hinkson (an independent consultant experienced in working with community groups) is being used effectively by a number of Sport England regions in a proactive way to target black and minority ethnic (BME) populations. Support is offered to community groups to take them through the planning phase as well as completing the application form. Additionally, joint-funded posts between Sport England and partner organisations have worked well in promoting applications from target groups and generating 'new' applicants rather than more of the 'usual suspects'. For instance, in the East Midlands the English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) and *Voice East Midlands* manage part-time posts for disabled and BME populations respectively and this approach appears to be paying dividends in numbers of successful applications.

## *6.3 Ease of application*

6.3.1 Scheme rationale

A4A deliverers generally support scheme priorities as a means of prioritising scarce resources, although there are Sport England reservations where some of their own priorities are not included within the regional focus. At a local level, comment from a rural community organisation is indicative of a widespread opinion: "The priorities are absolutely appropriate – it's effectively trying to redistribute wealth. It's effective to put it into projects which benefit local people." However, some respondents from community groups commented on their perception of 'political correctness' within the designation of priorities like BME groups, disabled people, and women. One of the questionnaires was returned with a lengthy racist protest that 'the pakis' unfairly got all the money.

Scheme targets of increased participation, skill development and quality of life are similarly deemed acceptable (they are 'catch all') and fit well with both a sporting agenda and the objectives of community organisations.

6.3.2 The process itself

Survey respondents expressed predominantly positive views about the scheme. Only 8% of survey respondents found the process complicated. Everybody else regarded it as reasonable (76%) or very simple (17%) (*Fig 12*). However, comments from interviewees suggest a more complex picture regarding ease of application. Where an organisation has a predominantly middle class and 'professional' membership, they face few problems completing the application form and can readily access advice from leisure professionals. Other groups less used to such application processes need additional assistance in taking the first steps to applying. In the view of one Sport England Regional Director: "The unfairness in the system is that the less professional applicants are not coming through".

Fig 12 - Application Process

How would you describe the process of applying for a grant?
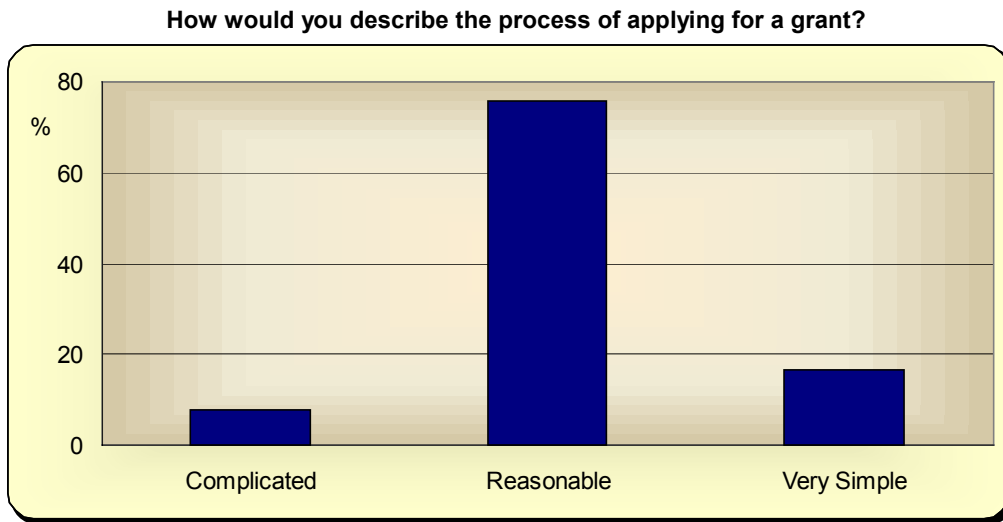
Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   *CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003*

Questionnaire respondents were asked their views on a variety of issues related to the *Awards for All* process (*Fig 13*). Two thirds considered that the scheme had been flexible enough to meet their particular needs. The majority (55%) felt that the speed of decision making was good, and 46% commended the community-based nature of the programme. Most considered the application process to be straightforward (65%), but fewer (38%) considered that the process was welcoming to new or inexperienced applicants. Another measure of satisfaction is that only 3% could identify nothing good about the scheme.

Fig 13 - Views of the Awards for All Scheme

What do you like about the Awards for All programme?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   *CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003*

6.3.3 Conditions of award

Local groups were generally happy with the limitation of one application per year (or a limit of £5K per year if more than one) as they considered one project sufficient for them to deal with at any one time. From the deliverers' viewpoint, this 12-month timescale helps to avoid seasonality issues. However, one community respondent thought that the condition relating to spend within one year was unfair toward non-sport organisations that might have greater difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified activity instructors.

6.3.4 Budget parameters

Some Sport England and *A4A* staff, as well as other partners and community groups, suggest that the lowering of the scheme minimum grant (£500) might help groups whose project costs fall between this figure and the (lower) amounts of support that local authorities and others can offer. Others disagree, suggesting that the scheme shouldn't be seen to subsidise local authority provision in particular, or alternatively that it should be reasonably easy for groups to 'work up' scheme costs legitimately to reach at least a minimum of £500 project costs.

Most respondents (of all types) feel that the upper £5,000 limit is appropriate for a small grants system. However, deliverers recognise that a lot of applications just under this figure suggests that project budgets are being 'created' to maximise grants rather than representing actual project costs. A wheelchair basketball club suggested a need to raise the grant ceiling in 'exceptional cases', e.g. for expensive items of equipment such as sports wheelchairs. Deliverers were cautious of accepting any exceptions to the general rule on the basis that this would over-complicate what is designed to be a simple system. One Sport England Regional Director reflected the view of several respondents in advocating an extension of the successful *A4A* philosophy to deliver much larger projects (up to £30,000) – i.e. with a 'light touch' and minimal paperwork – enabling the establishment of posts for development work and bigger (county/regional) coach development projects. Others clearly would not support this proposal since they consider grants over £5,000 would demand greater auditing controls.

6.3.5 Documentation requirements

A new or amended constitution was required for 17% of the organisations surveyed, and 11% needed to introduce new or improved accounting procedures (*Fig 14*).

A4A and Sport England officers deem the current documentation to be necessary and minimal for auditing purposes, but acknowledge that some community groups operating on a purely informal and unstructured basis need help with constitutions and bank accounts. While this undoubtedly adds time to the whole application process, none of the interviewed projects feel that this is an inappropriate requirement. For other, 'harder to reach' groups, however, filling in forms is a daunting prospect and may serve to emphasise their exclusion if only those with administrative experience and higher literacy skills can negotiate the paperwork.

Fig 14 - Structural Changes

Did your organisation have to make any changes to its structure?
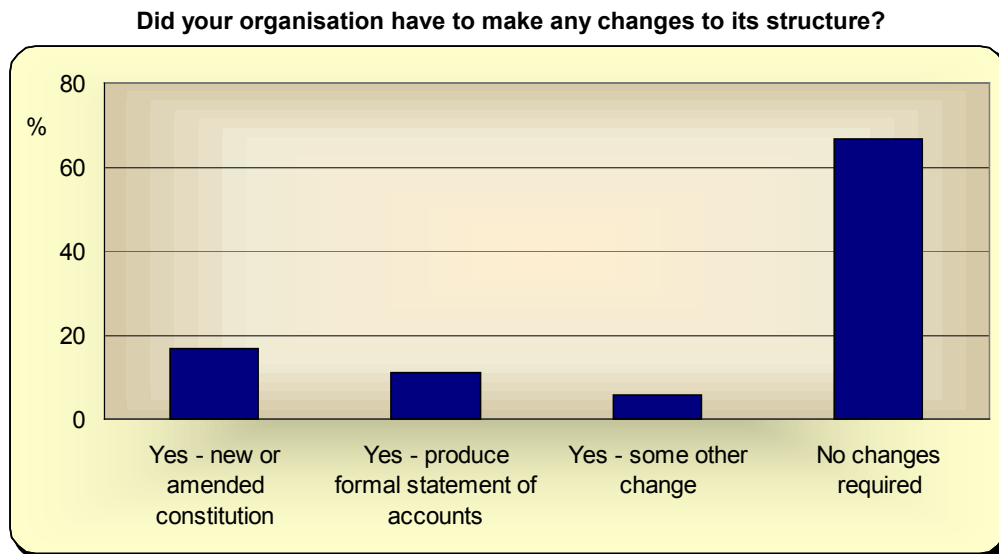
Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

6.4 Support

6.4.1 Advice received

Some applicants found the advice offered to them by *A4A* officers insufficient. However, several *A4A* officers commented on the constraints under which they operate, such that they are restricted to offering general rather than case-specific advice in order to maintain impartiality. "Between 20-25% of applicants call the *A4A* office for advice and we give general support/explanation of the application process" (*A4A* officer). While resources may be targeted at 'drumming up' applications (i.e. workshops for awareness) from priority groups, they are not aimed at assisting those groups with completing the application itself. *A4A* directs groups to partner organisations for further assistance.

Questionnaire returns (*Fig 15*) indicate that only 16% had had contact with Sport England prior to making an application, only 3% had attended a Sport England *A4A* seminar, and only 2% had visited the Sport England website. Slightly higher percentages had made contact with *Awards for All* – 27% prior to application, mostly by telephone. However, only 3% had used their website, and a similar percentage had attended a seminar arranged by Awards for All. More contact prior to application existed with local authorities – 23% had a telephone conversation, and 29% had a face-to-face meeting with somebody from the local authority.

Sport England encourages groups to allow an appropriate support agency, or previously successful bidder, to scrutinise the form but there is no automatic trigger for this when an enquiry is made. A senior Sport Development Officer described a very good relationship with Sport England regionally who would provide advice on applications, but despite expecting the same from *A4A*, he "had never heard from them".

Fig 15 - Contact Prior to Application
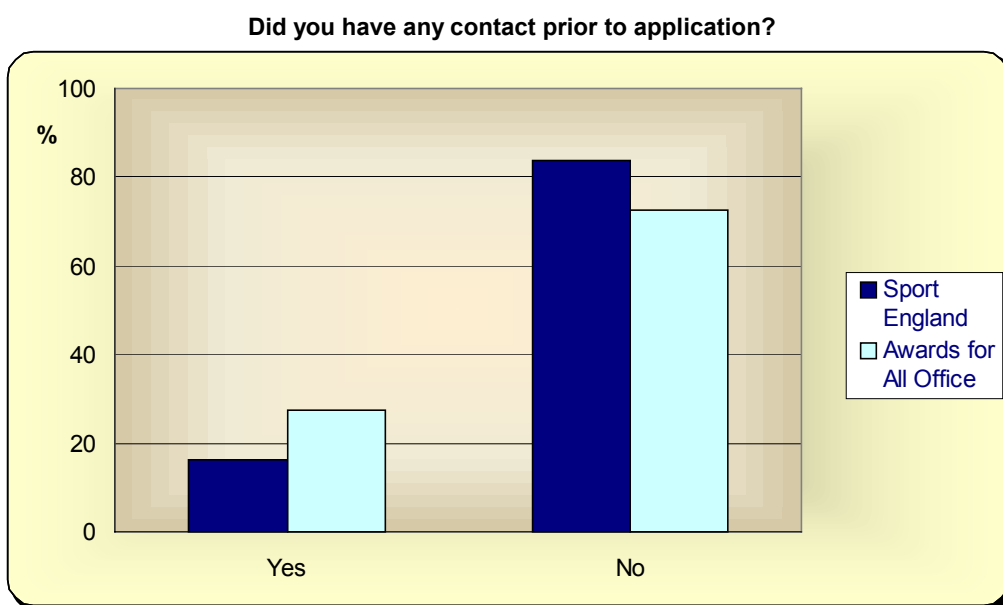
Did you have any contact prior to application?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003
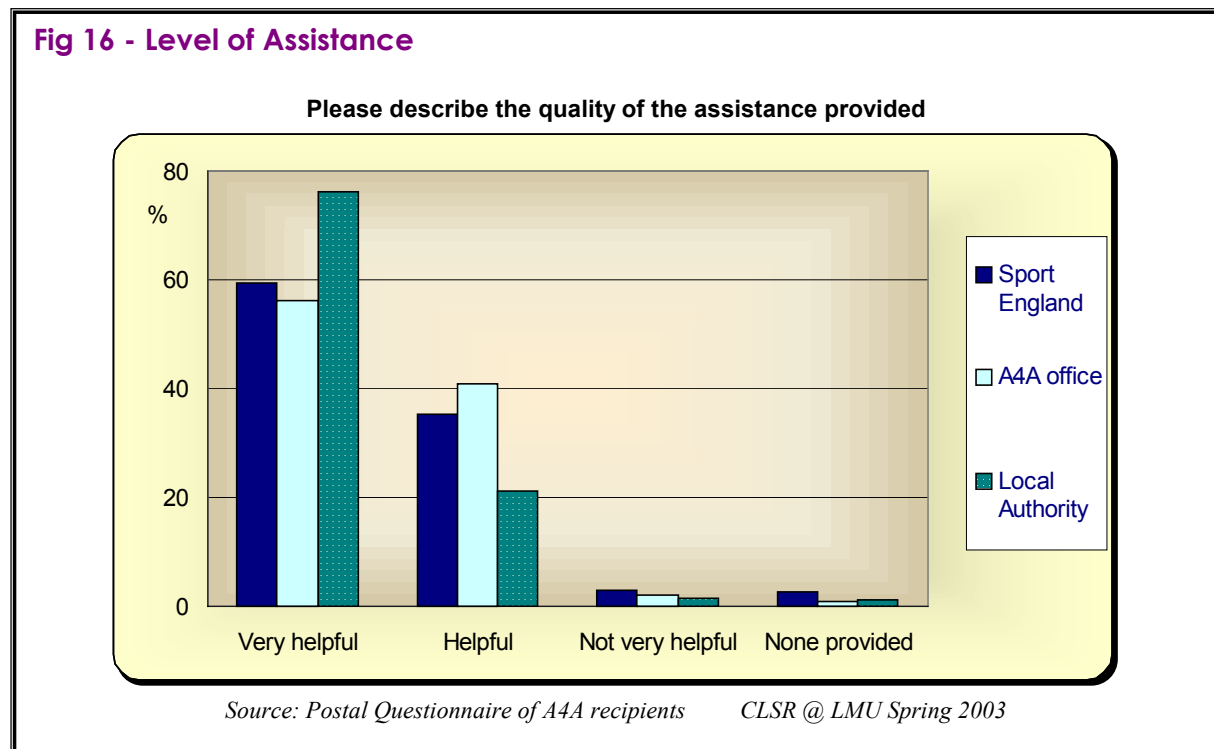
What form did any contact take?
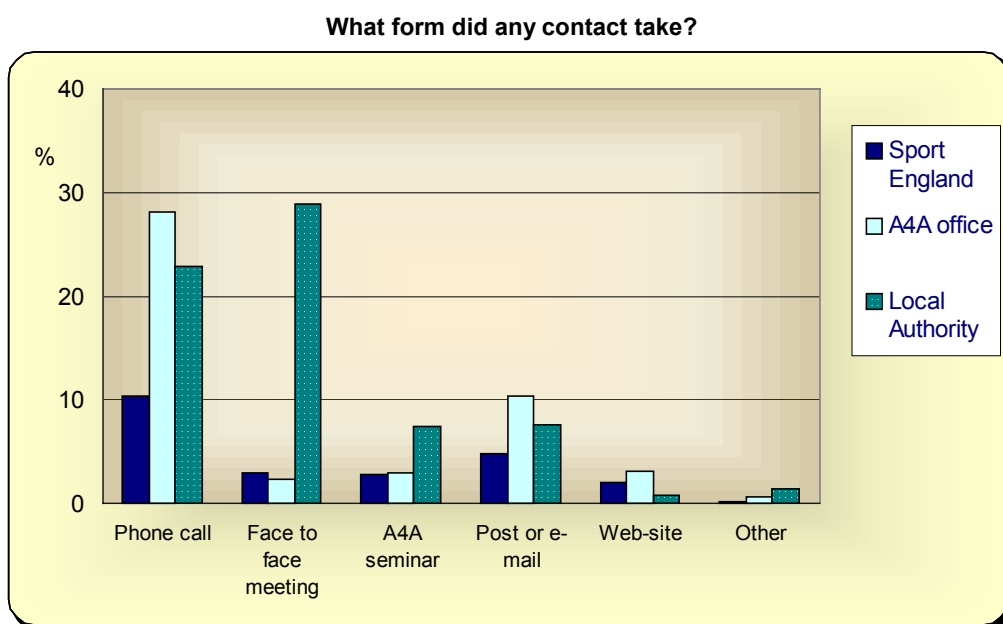
Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

Almost all questionnaire respondents indicated that where assistance was provided, it was rated as being helpful or very helpful (*Fig 16*): Sport England, 59% 'very helpful'; A4A, 56% 'very helpful'; and local authorities, 76% 'very helpful'.

In our fieldwork, those community groups and clubs who had made use of professional assistance also spoke very favourably of the support they received. By the applicants' own admission, some of the bids may never have succeeded without this input. Some had made earlier, unsuccessful bids and the situation had only been rectified with professional support. There is a general perception that prospective applicants need to be proactive and seek assistance. This could be problematic for those with limited awareness or who lack

confidence. Several feel that a mentoring procedure should be initiated as soon as an enquiry is made, with a 'buddy system' involving successful past applicants a popular suggestion. There was a suggestion that paid administrative support should be offered to community groups making an application, because of the huge demands on volunteers with full-time jobs and family commitments.

Fig 16 - Level of Assistance

Please describe the quality of the assistance provided

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

6.4.2 System 'winners and losers'

Sport England officers acknowledge that a good application technique is needed to be successful in applying. A senior SDO says, "It's about form filling competence. Those 'in the know' do well if they're professional enough." He feels the application form puts many people off, and that some groups are initially 'knocked back' or put off, but with support from his department more have been able to be successful. Many community groups find the professional input of SDOs and others useful in helping them think through the sports developmental process and use the right 'buzzwords' to reach a successful conclusion. Similarly, SDO respondents commented that they could supply the appropriate terminology ('Sport England speak'). This penalises good projects that are not written in a 'professional' style.

6.4.3 Subverting the system

8% of the surveyed organisations were formed specifically to apply for an *A4A* grant. Half of these indicated that the organisation intends to continue even after the *A4A* project has been completed. However, deliverers and partner organisations have evidence that some new groups are forming just to access *A4A*. The planned activity may be legitimate, but in some cases they believe those concerned are ineligible to apply through their existing organisations. They also reported other 'scams', e.g. coaches actively canvassing organisations to apply for *A4A* funding for equipment and coaching costs to cover their own expenses. Others consider

that there are many instances of applications by well-established organisations not really in need of grant, but massaging the true facts since they view *A4A* as an easy "add on, tick box exercise".

Such practices may not be very common, but they clearly concerned various respondents. It is easier for local face-to-face workers to police sharp practice than it is for national officers to do so, though *A4A* officers felt confident they were able to deal with any identified abuse of the system. Nonetheless, at least one SDO feels that the scheme evaluation is not enough to guard against abuses: "the big failing is that it doesn't check loopholes. Word spreads about how to navigate your way around the award". Despite doing "loads of references", he had never been questioned about any bid by *A4A*.

6.5 Assessment

6.5.1 Staff skills

The training of *A4A* assessing officers is key to ensuring that it is not just the 'professional application writers' who get through the system; fundamental if the scheme is to benefit the 'harder to reach' community groups. A consultant commissioned by Sport England feels that the scrutiny of applications is problematic and that this is accentuated by staff turnover at both Sport England and *A4A*, resulting in a real issue of lack of local knowledge. However, there were mixed views from *A4A* staff about the levels of expertise that they ought to possess. Whereas one officer admitted limitations in their knowledge of sport (within a system where they assess all types of schemes) and the 'technical' terms applicants might use, another felt that this was not an issue. In terms of local knowledge, messages were similarly mixed: whilst conceding that SDOs are more 'on the ball' in terms of knowing particular communities, some *A4A* officers believe that they have sufficient knowledge to assess projects fairly and are skilled at 'sussing out' potential problems.

A4A officers feel that they can also identify 'repeat' applications (the use of common project templates by numerous applicants) and do divert more time to dealing with these, i.e. above the average 20 minutes per application. The process involves a need to "spot authenticity… to see through applications full of buzzwords and gloss, watching for professional form fillers". *A4A* officers also believe that they can fairly readily identify where there has been an overly heavy SDO input to applications. One explained how *A4A* are not looking to be blinded with lots of statistics for a project to make its case; they advise everyone to "articulate the basic argument" but bear the criteria in mind. The common position of A4A staff is that, "Statistical analysis of applications might reveal which boxes were ticked, but that is only one of many factors considered when evaluating an application".

Even where acceptable schemes come through the system, there is now insufficient funding to award grants to all. *A4A* officers described the demoralising feeling that is associated with assessing good applications knowing that there is not enough money in the 'pot' to reward them.

6.5.2 Scoring system

Respondents seemed unaware of any written justification for a weighting system that seems designed to try and avoid a clustering of similar scores. Its advantage was explained by one Sport England officer:

> "It works well for under-represented groups, provided support is there. It is very much a desk assessment, so everything has to be in place on the application form. We cannot second-guess the background of the group".

Sport England plays a key role here at the *A4A* Panel meetings (Joint Regional Committees) because of its greater background knowledge of sport. Some individuals believe the points scoring system helps with issues of consistency, but feel they could benefit customers with more "flexibility and human touch". Others were far less charitable about the weighted scoring system and considered it heavily weighted toward the regional focus (12 points out of a potential 26/27). Some *A4A* and Sport England officers recognise this as a simplistic system. Typical comments were:

> "It's very black and white. I'm very dubious about awarding on the basis of a point-scoring system. It needs subjective input as well"

> "It's a blunt instrument: a sledgehammer to crack a nut. There are a lot of shades of grey within this 12 points – it needs refining."

They suggest that more detailed 'tiers' of priority, containing more defined targets or geographical areas, should replace the present 'catch all' categories. They also feel that the points scoring for simple 'yes/no' responses is crude and should be refined. One of the main concerns is that a poor scheme developmentally could outscore a good one where the latter misses some of the regional priorities. However, if meeting such priorities is the key underpinning rationale this seems quite reasonable, as long as the former schemes are robust enough. The clear concern here is that supporting weaker projects may compromise sustainability.

While acknowledging that the system was not perfect, others cautioned against dramatic change. A Sport England Regional Director says:
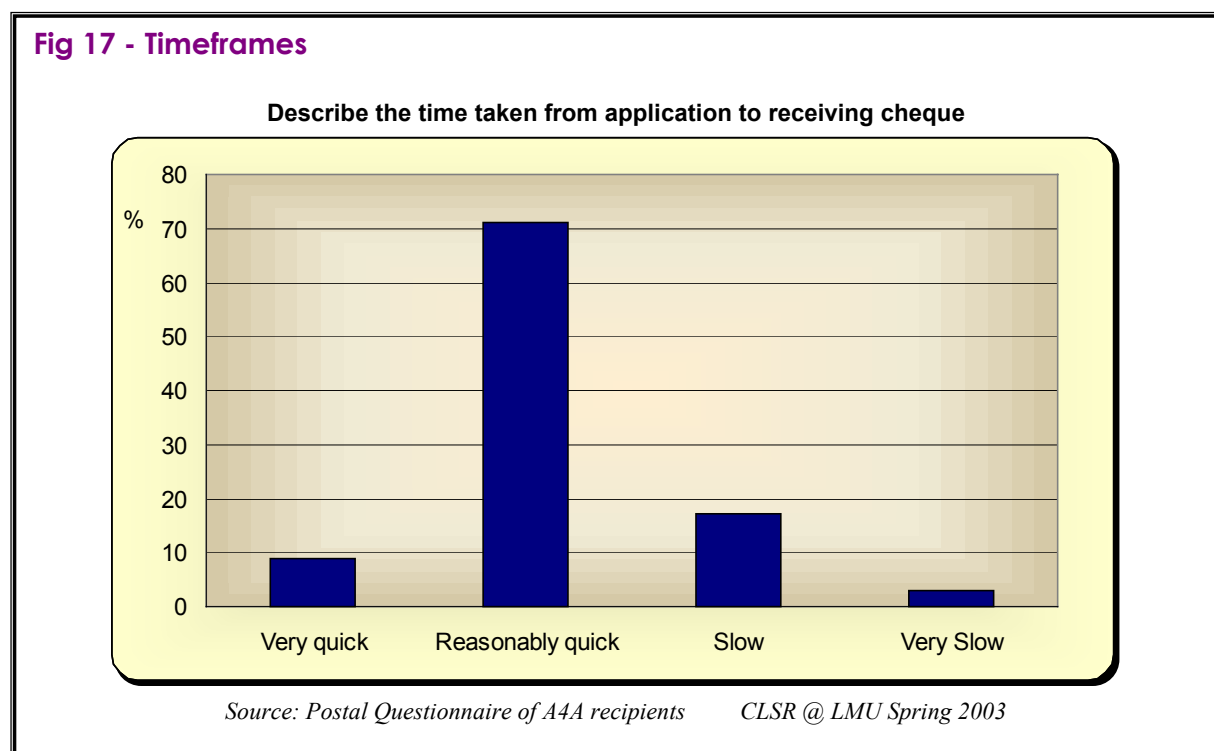
> "The scoring system is easily criticised but how do you improve it? The rating system is not operated properly by Panels: it should be weighted differently by each JRC but they tend just to adopt the national template."

An A4A officer explained: "It (assessment) could get extremely complicated in relation to the size of schemes. A more complicated system would be more labour intensive and move away from the 'light touch' approach". Certainly the simplicity and accessibility of the A4A scheme compared to other awards is consistently viewed as a valued attribute.

6.6   *Timescales*

The decision-making timescale (average 12 week turnaround), while better than other grant-making schemes, is governed by the JRC 'sittings', and some partner organisations are concerned that even a relatively short delay creates frustration.   Interestingly, among applicants opinion is divided about the length of time between application and decision. The applicants who happen to have a professional role in sport in addition to their volunteer role feel that it is too long, whilst the 'lay' volunteers are satisfied. Community organisations generally felt the decision-making timescale was either reasonable or good. Some did not really have any comparative timescale against which to judge this anyway, but imagined it would take longer.

Most questionnaire respondents (80%) felt the processing time from submitting the application to receipt of a cheque to be reasonable or very quick (*Fig 17*). Only 20% rated the system as being slow or very slow.

Fig 17 - Timeframes

Describe the time taken from application to receiving cheque

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

6.6.1   Joint Regional Committee (JRC)

The JRC typically has a mix of officers from distributor agencies and appointed lay people with particular expertise, e.g. disability sport.   However, there are inequalities of representation here as some distributors have several lay representatives while others have none.

Two of the Panel members interviewed felt that the JRC was a rubber-stamping process and that their influence was minimal. A Sport England Regional Director felt uncomfortable in offering judgement on some non-sport schemes because "the system didn't offer sufficient

individual project details in the absence of sector-specific knowledge". Suggestions were offered by interviewees for improving this situation:

- Giving more delegated decision-making to *A4A* grants officers on clear-cut schemes (currently only Senior Awards Officers have the power to deny applications and this is on purely technical grounds) and letting the Panel concentrate on problematic applications and policy-making issues

- Initiating a twin track scheme with a simpler fast track for smaller awards, but retaining the current arrangement for higher awards.

- Allowing telephone applications (for a really customer-friendly system), as is the case with other products e.g. insurance policies, etc.

- Have 'virtual' panel meetings via electronic links (rather than everyone having to meet at one place and time)

6.7   *Feedback & Monitoring*

6.7.1 Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

Some experienced officers from both sport and community backgrounds believe there is insufficient feedback from *A4A* and consequently people feel turned down for vague reasons. Feedback within a computer-generated response is worded legalistically by the audit department and has created some resentment in the past. It is clear that the rejection letters have improved from the former 'one-liners' as *A4A* teams now try to add a few explanatory sentences where possible. While resource constraints mean there is a need to minimise officer time, several respondents felt this was insufficient. Those who had previously submitted failed bids are unanimous about the extent and quality of the feedback received. One interviewee summed it up as 'rubbish' (though may have been responding to the earlier procedure). Unsuccessful applicants need clear and adequate information about why they have been rejected (and also whether lack of funds has played a part). Constructive feedback could encourage re-application with applicants referred to local authority sports development units for support. A senior SDO bemoans the lack of information he receives, on either successful or unsuccessful projects, believing that if groups are 'knocked-back' they may never try again, but if they are supported they may well do so.

6.7.2 Monitoring

Grant recipients are asked to do a two-page 'end of award' report including their spending and the impact of the project. This is sent to every group 12 months after the award, with a reminder if they do not submit. While *A4A* staff express the wish to visit more projects as they happen - "I would love to visit say 1 in 10 if resources allowed" - they struggle to find time for even a minimum of monitoring visits.

Opinion was divided on the appropriateness of the current level of monitoring awards. According to some, more detailed monitoring was "worthwhile doing to prove the benefits". However, others caution against 'over-egging the pudding', recognising a need to balance the monitoring requirements with the 'low risk, light touch' approach.

The information gathered by *A4A*, however, was described by one Sport England Regional Director as 'pretty useless'. Whereas the pre-award assessment relates to whether a project meets the scheme's aims, the post-award reconciliation only includes a small section relating to this and is oriented towards appropriate accounting. This caused a partner to comment: "*A4A* are more concerned with budget overspend than project outputs". There is no overall collation of numbers involved via the scheme:

> "The end of project form asks for numbers (of participants) but we don't have a 'stats' package to analyse how it is reaching target groups and our overall success" (*A4A* officer).

There is little collection of evidence beyond this 12-month, end of project form and random tracking of 5% of schemes. None of the case study projects had been approached for any monitoring information beyond the standard *pro forma*. A volunteer from a newly formed club felt it strange that there was a lack of feedback on the application and that no evidence was required other than an end of award report. Nor are questions asked about sustainability on the application form or 12-month form and *A4A* officers are open in acknowledging the lack of system monitoring information. A typical comment is that "no time is invested in asking how the project will carry on, especially with new groups".
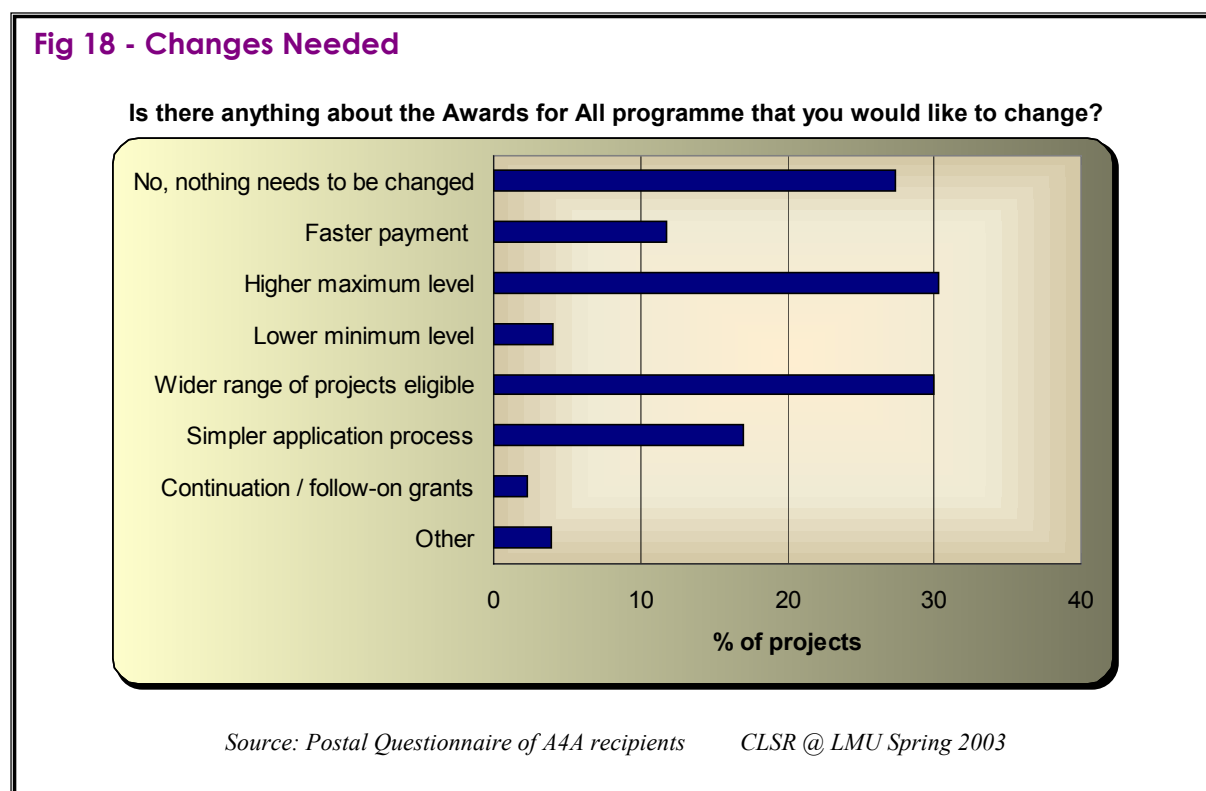
Assessing the impact of sport, or on sport, is difficult because of the shortcomings in coding the data. Moreover there is considerable variation between regions in the amount of data held by Sport England as distinct from *A4A*. This differs from those who rely predominantly on *A4A* to supply information, to the East Midlands officer who records separated detailed spreadsheets summarising schemes by a variety of different target/geographical parameters (to some extent this relates back to the region's original role in piloting the earlier *Millennium Awards* that predate the current scheme).

7. Conclusions

7.1 Overall View

We found the sports *Awards for All* to be overwhelmingly well received by the recipients and those promoting sport (27% of survey respondents were sufficiently happy with the scheme to conclude that nothing needed to be changed) (see *Fig 18*). This popularity stems from its status as a small grant scheme with few restrictions.

There were some dissenting voices regarding the details of the mechanisms and not surprisingly the few we encountered who had had their applications rejected were less enthusiastic. More generally there are those who feel excluded because they do not happen to match the *A4A* priorities, and consider themselves to be discriminated against (especially if their organisation is not able to benefit from other Sport England Lottery Fund programmes). The most common suggestions for improvements from those in the survey were to increase the maximum award above £5,000 (30% – 4.0% suggested a lower minimum), allow a wider range of projects to meet the eligibility criteria (30%) and make payment quicker (12%).

Fig 18 - Changes Needed

Is there anything about the Awards for All programme that you would like to change?

Source: Postal Questionnaire of A4A recipients   CLSR @ LMU Spring 2003

At all levels there seems to be some confusion about whether the scheme's raison d'être lies in achieving social outcomes or providing for sport. The idea of sport being used to address a social agenda is still alien to many in sport. Linked with this, our interviews revealed some tension between sporting priorities and *A4A* priorities. Sport England's regional priorities may often not coincide with the priorities selected for *A4A* in the region. Moreover some feel aggrieved that apparently similar projects may be successful in one region and not in another.

Few of the respondents to our postal survey had heard about the scheme from *A4A* or Sport England. Promotion of the scheme does seem to have been driven by a concerted strategy. As the emphasis is no longer on increasing the volume of applications, promotion needs to be 'smarter', carefully directed to the identified as being in special need. Nonetheless, despite the beliefs of some of our respondents, the findings of the postal survey suggest that *A4A* is not just addressing the usual suspects. The vast bulk of the funding is going to organisations that have not been in receipt of public funding before. However, there is still some way to go satisfy the needs of the hardest to reach groups. People have to be already socially included to participate in the applications game.

We also found a local/national tension with some being concerned that a national scheme, even if administered at a local level, could not be sufficiently informed of local needs and practices to make appropriate decisions. The current position is that local authorities and other agencies can support the submission of applications, but some wanted them to have a formal input to the decision-making process, others for them to be responsible for the decisions, and others that they should have their own ring-fenced pot to allocate. While some of these suggestions seem unlikely for a national scheme they sprang from a concern that national mechanisms can never hope to engage the excluded, and if that is to happen there has to be intensive work at a local level. This re-emphasises the importance of engaging local partners in common cause. Suggestions came from 'partners' and applicants alike, that there should be some **formal** triggering of 'professional' support (most probably from the relevant local authority) when an application is despatched.

As currently constructed the awards database is misleading in the way project foci are recorded. There is an associated concern that this may affect decision-making in a time-constrained process that is dependent on standardised data serving a points system. The points system itself caused some concern among respondents worried that preoccupation with points would override the quality of application. The variation between regions in the priorities selected has led to some in the sports world perceiving inequality because apparently similar proposals might receive a different response in different regions. This may be hard for sports administrators to understand but is not indicative of inconsistency but of projects being judged according to the contribution they can make to the regional priorities. This may be a genuine concern, for example when the *A4A* priorities do not accord with those of the respective National Governing Body.

There seems to be some confused thinking around eligibility for grant aid. In some cases it may simply be a case of ensuring that clearer messages get to potential applicants, in others it may suggest a review of practice. For example, while schools and large charitable organisations can apply for funding, local authority youth services cannot, and sports clubs of modest size (turnover of anything over £20,000) are not considered to be within the priorities of the scheme. Not surprisingly this causes some resentment in the sports world, especially as many in the former category are practised (even professional) fundraisers. Moreover, some large organisations and public bodies operate through the name of other groups. While professionals learn to navigate the system, others may be excluded.

The minimum auditing requirements were much appreciated, but still appear to be too onerous for some of the hardest to reach groups. At the same time however, some Sport England officers and 'partners' were concerned that the systems in place left them struggling to generate useable statistics without meaningful evaluation. Good quality quantitative and

qualitative intelligence from this apparently successful initiative would be invaluable to the sports development community as a whole.

The injection of money is small for any one organisation, but it was clear from our fieldwork that it can set in train a process that has a disproportionate impact as a result of an organisation engaging with the many processes involved.

In a brand conscious world it seems unfortunate that participants in A4A funded projects should be unaware of its contribution. Unlike the Sport England Lottery Fund, there is no identification of A4A at the point of consumption. Some means of identification would not just spread awareness of a source of grant aid, but would also allow people to appreciate the return on their involvement in the National Lottery.

7.2   Increasing participation

Although some applicants were unable to articulate precise numbers, there is an unequivocal view that actual numbers have been increased, or that the total market has been increased for an otherwise difficult-to-access activity, resulting in participation from previously under-represented sections of the community.

7.3   Enhancing skills

One of the key contributions of *A4A* has been in increasing the skills of members of recipient groups by enabling them to take coaching awards, either for the first time or at a higher level. This has led to increased confidence and enhanced their employability. *A4A* has fuelled more and better coaching that is helping sports participants to get better at playing their sports.

7.4   Improving the quality of life

The evaluation team was persuaded that by introducing 'new' people into sport A4A has been and contributing directly to their quality of life, offering direct benefits to parts of the population often ignored. Grander claims about turning communities around should be resisted because these are only small injections.

7.5   Increasing organisational capacity and promoting sustainability

The research has demonstrated that organisations benefit through having more people qualified in the technical aspects of their sports, more and better equipment, increased confidence and awareness of what is available to help them develop. In such ways A4A makes a significant contribution to the conditions that *support* sustainability, but in most cases this is not an end in itself.

A sense of perspective has to be maintained. This is a **small** grant initiative and in the grand scheme of things individual projects will only have small impacts. However, at local level these can be significant. The aims of *A4A* may be somewhat exaggerated given the nature of the individual projects supported, but the benefits derived from the scheme have been large in comparison to the investment made. And the collective impact of 14,000 projects around the country is considerable.

7.6 Good Practice Summary

It was not the goal of the research to produce a guide to good practice, but some practices commend themselves.

7.6.1 Encouragement and promotion

- *Partnerships between Sport England and community organisations to promote the scheme to priority groups:* joint funding between Sport England and EFDS has established posts in the East Midlands and the South East to promote A4A among disability groups (and for a black and ethnic minority post in partnership with VOICE, East Midlands), thereby offering developmental advice important for organisations not used to the applications process.

7.6.2 Reaching disadvantaged groups

- *Linking in to community networks and community development staff to bridge the links between A4A and the community:* Sport England in Yorkshire uses the system it set up itself via BEMSPORT (Black and Ethnic Minorities Sports Forum - Yorkshire). In addition it employs consultants with a community work background to access hard to reach groups throughout the region. Both are being successfully employed to pass the message and to empower BME and other groups to access A4A funding. Some Local authorities have very good communication networks that reach disadvantaged groups and their local knowledge is often current and accurate. A good example of this is in Leeds where the community outreach section of the Sports Development Unit has a well-developed network on the ground in local communities. This is also true in the SAZ in Bradford.

- *Training of community facilitators to assist local groups:* as has happened through BEMSport there is a view that the training of community trainers who are able to facilitate both further training and support for individual groups is crucial. The consultants employed amplify this view and place it at the top of the list on their wider strategic map, independent of any A4A initiative. "Training more facilitators is the best way to reach groups and give them the confidence to apply for funding" –(not just A4A funding). There is support for this approach from the BME communities and those employed to deliver this work but this is tempered by a concern that whilst much more could be done, resources are needed at a higher level than are currently available. This is both in terms of funding the training of more trainers and providing more money to support the greater number of schemes that would follow.

- *Using consultants with community backgrounds to reach those beyond established sports networks:* the added value achieved through the multiplier effect of one consultant providing training, confidence and empowerment to hard to reach groups is very logical, effective and well received. This is particularly important where local community and sports networks are not well developed. It is essential that such messages are delivered by people who have a real understanding and empathy for community needs perhaps more than sporting needs. Clifford Hinkson's workshops, addressing more directly the priority groups who are beyond the normal sporting networks, lead the field in this regard.

- *Having sufficient flexibility in the scheme to allow projects to modify the use of the grant as the project progresses*: where it has been poorly negotiated this has led to friction; where it has been approved it has been much appreciated by small organisations with few other resources.

7.6.3. Providing support

- *Encouraging applicants to consult an appropriate support agency or previously successful bidder for guidance:* Sport England in the North East attempts to enable groups to have their application forms scrutinised by 'experts' in this way, prior to the submission of the application. It should be noted that this is in no way formalised as yet, although the intention is to strengthen this aspect of the process, building on the links that have been created in parts of the region.

- *Support workers making draft constitutions available and providing advice on setting-up a bank account:* many agencies assist groups that aren't already constituted and may have difficulty in getting organised on a more formal footing. A Senior Sports Development Worker (who recognises that the word "Constitution" sometimes puts some people off) offers them a "dummy" constitution to help and clarify matters. And some put them in touch with someone like the Community Voluntary Service who will draft a constitution with them free of charge.

7.6.4 Obtaining feedback and monitoring progress

- *Presentations by partners and other organisations to Joint Regional Committees to identify key issues among their constituencies:* in the East Midlands, the JRC has provided the opportunity for several successful schemes to give presentations – this has helped panel members to recognise the problems experienced and the solutions found by applicants, led to a more detailed record of good practice and provided subjective assessment of scheme impact.

- *Tracking of successful schemes:* at least one SDO in the North East circumvents the lack of formal, detailed evaluation of projects by maintaining a list of award recipients in the borough. Follow-up contact (after a specified period following receipt of the A4A money) is made to ensure that the project is progressing smoothly, and assistance to the A4A recipient is offered in terms of a) overcoming difficulties in delivering the project as originally envisaged, b) making any allowable adjustments to the project to account for changing circumstances and c) planning for the future of the group, including further bids for funding.

- *Tracking of unsuccessful schemes:* in the East Midlands, the Sport England liaison officer for A4A keeps track of unsuccessful sports schemes and refers them back to local SDOs if they are deemed worthy of additional help to improve them. In this way, schemes have been offered additional developmental support in order to make subsequently successful applications.

7.6.5 Local development

- *Good applications*:
  - ➤ show how they address A4A priorities
  - ➤ are realistic about what they can achieve
  - ➤ demonstrate how they will contribute to sports development

- *Commitment to training and coaching of sports club in disadvantaged areas that contributes to increased sustainability:* one of the big shortfalls in disadvantaged areas is in terms of sports administration and coaching skills. Projects that can enhance these are particularly valuable in such areas, leaving a lasting legacy.

- *Clubs that have used A4A money for outreach work, and in time encouraging a link into the main club:* this is a challenging innovation for many voluntary sports clubs to contemplate, but one club interviewed has achieved this with support from the local authority. The initiative is linked to coaching award places funded by the same A4A award. As 'payback' for having their award places paid for, the newly qualified or upgraded coaches have established and developed the outreach session on the club's behalf.

- *Identifying links from the project to other clubs:* this may be particularly important for time limited projects to ensure participants can continue their sporting interests after the end of the project.

8 Recommendations

The funding pot

§1   Increase the overall scheme funding to a higher level – the diversion of a further relatively small part of the Sport England Lottery Fund would represent a big increase in the contribution to A4A (£ for £ it is widely regarded by Sport England respondents and others as the best value scheme).

Promotion

§2   Sport England and Awards for All should feel confident in advocating the success of the scheme.

§3   Make quite explicit the social agenda to address disadvantage, and encourage those excluded by this policy to seek alternative funds.

§4   Instead of making it available on request, A4A branding should be supplied to all recipients with encouragement to use it (e.g. logo sheet and self-adhesive stickers).

The light touch

§5   Accept the auditing limitations of a 'light touch' – despite some Sport England and A4A officer concerns about accountability, a clear advantage of the scheme is its minimal documentation requirements. Further demands would mean that the scheme would become less accessible.

§6   Consider a fast track system to process more quickly grants up to (say) £1,500 (delegated officer decision). Despite the majority of survey respondents being happy with overall timescales, the speed of decision making regarding simple small-scale projects can be accelerated outside the formal JRC meeting cycle and thereby also make better use of the time and input of panel members.

§7   Accept that sustainability is extremely difficult to measure, and attach less significance to it as an assessment criterion. Sustaining the initiative of an injection of less than £5,000 may be difficult, but training, coaching and equipment are all likely to leave a legacy even if in another sporting organisation.

Good practice

§8   Extend the practice of some regions in providing more detailed profiles / case studies of successful awards to inspire and guide applicants.

Access

§9   Remove the prioritisation that disadvantages voluntary sports clubs with a turnover in excess of £20,000.

§10   Review requirements to provide original bank statements from all applicants, and make clear to public bodies their position regarding the requirements for constitution and accounts.

Support

§11   Accompany the despatch of an application with an alert to a local partner capable of identifying a 'buddy' from a previously successful applicant able to offer advice

§12   Provide support for the under-resourced community networks, which are generally good but inconsistent in approach, enabling disadvantaged groups to be reached and the scheme's full potential to be achieved.

§13   Identify a means of offering support to unsuccessful bidders (poor feedback is resented), perhaps through an automatic referral to a local authority contact.

The hardest to reach

§14   Implement a more focussed method of marketing the scheme ('targeted marketing') to access the **hardest** to reach, by working through appropriate local community networks.

§15   Explore the possibility of simplifying the application form even further and making it shorter, thereby extending access to even more community groups

§16   Provide a better support mechanism for applicants, especially the hard to reach groups e.g. A4A could make lists of local contacts available to applicants.

§17   Follow a more overtly 'community development' approach when seeking to work with hard to reach groups. Ensure that (in the words of one partner agency) 'the right people are selling the message in the right place at the right time'.

§18   Some of the **very** hardest to reach need a 'stepping stone' prior to the current A4A scheme with its £500 threshold. Support needs to be provided locally for such groups.

§19   Consider lifting the restriction that prevents hard to reach groups working through a local authority 'host agency'.

Monitoring

§20 Change the application form and database to make it possible to identify and record the primary focus group for the project.