

Positive Futures impact report End of season review



Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce *End of Season Review*, the third Positive Futures impact report.

The first impact report, *Engaging with young people*, published in 2004 showed how Positive Futures projects up and down the country were beginning to work with thousands of young people who had become marginalised from mainstream services and opportunities. It set out how the range of activities was being broadened to reflect the aspirations of many of the young people involved in local projects, and how routes into education, training and employment were emerging.

Staying in touch, the second report, focused on the progress many of these young people were beginning to make. It showed how the proportion of young females attracted to regular activities had increased, as had the number of young people aged 17 to 19 years old. It also highlighted the development of staff, their agencies and the wider policy partnerships that had been created as a result of Positive Futures.

This third report, which marks the delivery of our initial three-year strategy, shows that more young people than ever, living in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of England and Wales, are currently involved in Positive Futures projects. An increasingly wide range of sports and other activities have been organised and the strong relationships built between project staff and young people are leading to other opportunities. Accredited training programmes and stronger links with schools, colleges and employers have eased the transition for many of these young people into the world of work.

Substance misuse intervention activities are now delivered with growing confidence. This progression should of course be seen in the context of the Positive Futures Workforce Quality Initiative, which has been further developed over the last 12 months to ensure

all front-line staff are competent and have the necessary skills and knowledge to work with marginalised young people.

The consistency of support the programme has achieved over the life of this strategy from agencies in the sport, education, health, criminal justice and social care sectors is impressive. The fact that so many of these have attributed increased opportunities for young people to become more involved in sport and activity and reductions in substance misuse, crime and anti-social behaviour to a Positive Futures project is an excellent endorsement of progress.

Special thanks and acknowledgement should go to the Football Foundation for its continued support and investment, which has allowed a number of new projects across the country to grow and develop. This support, along with that of other government departments and national agencies, is a testament to the success of the programme's ability to work in partnership.

Our decision to externalise the management of Positive Futures to Crime Concern was taken after much consideration and presents the programme with a new and exciting future. We trust they will continue to build on the work that we have started, and support and encourage more and more projects to work with young people across the country.

Finally, there is much to commend in this report and all those involved in delivering the programme can be proud of their contribution to date. But, as ever, the challenge remains for all involved to build on these successes in order that we continue to provide a positive future for every young person.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hazel Blears". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath.

Hazel Blears

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Executive summary

Positive Futures is a national sports-based social inclusion programme, managed up to the end of March 2006 from within the Home Office Drug Strategy Directorate. It is currently delivered through 115 local partnership projects located throughout England and Wales.

Following its launch in 2000 and the roll-out of two phases of projects, Positive Futures produced a strategy document that outlined the programme's guiding principles and objectives for the next three-year strategy period to March 2006. Published in June 2003, *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* provides the benchmark against which to assess the programme's achievements as it moves towards the end of this period.

Commitments and key achievements

In *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, Positive Futures set itself some ambitious goals. Almost three years on it is clear that many of these goals have been met.

The key achievements are listed here.

- As of September 2005, a total of 109,546 young people have been involved in regular Positive Futures project activities since the programme began monitoring participation in this way in 2002.
- Thirty-seven new projects have been rolled out through the Drug Strategy Directorate and a further 19 projects by the Football Foundation.
- In response to the direct commitment to focus on work with 17 to 19 year olds, the proportion of participants in this age group has risen from 5 per cent in February 2003 to 18 per cent in September 2005.

- On the basis of the need for 'local opportunities for personal development [to emerge] organically on the basis of what engages effectively':
 - there are now 24 sports being delivered, which each have over 600 young people regularly participating;
 - the proportion of female participants has grown from 21 per cent to 34 per cent; and
 - 43 per cent of participants have remained engaged in regular activities for at least the last six months.
- In the context of the *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* definition of Positive Futures as a 'relationship strategy',¹ between March and September 2005:
 - almost 600 participants began looking for a job, with a similar number having actually obtained employment;
 - 509 young people took on volunteering roles;
 - over 4,000 participants signed up for, or completed, awards or training through Positive Futures projects;
 - 736 participants returned to full-time education and 1,756 were doing better in school since they became involved with Positive Futures; and
 - Positive Futures staff perceive that over 2,000 young people have improved their relations with peers and that 1,237 participants have made progress with their family relations.

¹ Home Office (2003) *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*

- In terms of the ultimate key aim of Positive Futures 'to have a positive influence on participants' substance misuse, physical activity and offending behaviour':
 - 50 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to drug use;
 - 90 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to the availability of sports activities;
 - 76 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to anti-social behaviour; and
 - 68 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to local crime rates.

Building a new infrastructure for sports-based social initiatives

Positive Futures achievements during the last three years were built on the development of a clear strategic framework, as concerned with building the capacity of projects to deliver as with its vision for the positive development of disadvantaged young people.

In order to achieve this, *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* identified four distinct areas that needed development to make sure that projects are sustained long after their initial funding ceases.

Workforce Quality Initiative

To ensure workforce quality, Positive Futures has developed a comprehensive programme of training in line with the skills base identified in the strategy document. Now in its third year, the Workforce Quality Initiative (WQI) objectives are to:

- identify the National Occupational Standards Positive Futures staff should be working to;

- assess staff performance, knowledge and skills to identify any training and development needs;
- provide relevant and targeted training and activities;
- evaluate the development of Positive Futures staff; and
- record and recognise the achievements of Positive Futures staff.

During 2004/05 the WQI provided a series of workshops focused on developing the following core competences:

- engaging with, working with, supporting and protecting young people;
- preparing, leading, concluding and reviewing sports and activity sessions;
- raising awareness of substances and their effects, and helping young people address their substance misuse;
- dealing with abusive and aggressive behaviour; and
- managing projects and delivering quality to stakeholders' requirements.

All workshops are available to both Positive Futures staff and people working on other similar sports-based initiatives. The workshop programme has been significantly updated for 2005/06, with a focus on more advanced topics. Added to this, Positive Futures, in partnership with SkillsActive, has developed two accredited training courses focused on delivering sport and physical activity within deprived communities. In partnership with Skills for Justice, Positive Futures is also piloting a Continuing Development Award in Substance Misuse (Young People), which will be rolled out nationally from April 2006 with all front-line staff included by March 2008.

Appropriate lead agencies

The *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* strategy document places a very heavy emphasis on the need for projects to be both 'credible' and 'flexible' in the ways in which they organise their work. To help, Positive Futures created a strategic framework and support structures, enabling even the newest of projects with little track record in the field to embrace the desired approach. However, it is clear that those agencies that promote and enable a style of working characterised by structural independence, a willingness to innovate, flexibility, passion, a desire to enhance provision and an intensive, long-term participant-focused delivery style are better suited to this approach.

While voluntary sector status does not provide any guarantee that a project will be successful, it does provide a structural framework and degree of independence which enables projects to generate better forms of working. These are: small-scale, locally based, well resourced and dynamic, with no single area of work dominating, thereby allowing design and approach to develop organically.

Strong effective local partnerships

Organisationally, Positive Futures relies on building and maintaining successful relationships between a range of partner agencies, purposely mirroring its wider delivery objectives. To help facilitate this, the national team developed regional network meetings, bringing together the Positive Futures projects in each region to share ideas and emphasise the benefits of partnership approaches.

The involvement of partners in individual projects has remained relatively stable throughout the three-year strategy period, with nine different

agencies figuring in the partnerships of 75 per cent of all projects. However, a whole plethora of agencies are now becoming involved in the direction of local Positive Futures projects. This reflects the growing awareness of the programme and recognition of the contribution it can make. It is equally encouraging that an increasingly wide range of agencies have become involved in providing young people with exit routes, helping to meet the wider objectives of the programme.

Central monitoring and evaluation framework

Cul-de-sacs and gateways emphasised the programme's role as an early intervention 'relationship strategy'. Its launch in 2003 recognised the need for new means of capturing the nature of the work and the journeys made by participants. Accordingly, a new monitoring and evaluation framework is currently being piloted at nine projects across England and Wales. This framework includes:

- a log book with session registers;
- a participant engagement matrix for assessing young people's progression;
- a participatory monitoring 'toolkit';
- a project database;
- an electronic annual reporting format; and
- ongoing longitudinal case study research.

It is hoped that through these approaches the first systematic longitudinal picture of the impact of sports-based social intervention will be generated, while also enabling projects to demonstrate the depth of their work. They will also allow the national management team to monitor individual project and programme-wide developments.



Introduction



This is the third impact report produced by Positive Futures. It provides details of the programme's progress in the final year of its three-year strategy, and looks at what the future holds as Positive Futures moves into its next phase of development.

Positive Futures is a national sports-based social inclusion programme which, until the end of March 2006, has been managed within the Home Office Drug Strategy Directorate. It is currently delivered through 115 local partnership projects located throughout England and Wales.

Following its launch in 2000 and the roll-out of two phases of projects, Positive Futures produced a strategy document to help generate a clearer understanding of 'the Positive Futures approach'. Published in June 2003, *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* outlined the programme's guiding principles and objectives for the next three-year period to March 2006.

Using a series of sporting metaphors, the strategy document was divided into five parts:

- the state of play: the current picture;
- rules of the game: the positive futures approach;
- taking the lead: drugs strategy directorate;
- team games: how positive futures meets the needs of its partners; and
- passing on the baton: ensuring continuity.

As well as setting out a fresh approach towards the delivery of sports-based social interventions, *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* outlined a series of commitments following fresh investment prompted by the 2002 Comprehensive Spending Review. These commitments incorporated specific project developments, including:

- the roll-out of a third phase of new projects in 'high crime areas' where Positive Futures had no presence; and

- the expansion of existing projects located in 'high crime areas', with a particular focus on work with 17 to 19 year olds.

The document also detailed wider initiatives designed to create a lasting legacy from this phase of the work. These included:

- a Workforce Quality Initiative to ensure staff had the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities to deliver the programme;
- support for project lead agencies;
- a commitment to building strong effective local partnerships linked to emerging regional government strategies; and
- the development of long-term funding strategies to ensure the sustainability of existing projects.

As such, *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* provides the benchmark against which to assess the achievements of Positive Futures as it moves towards the end of the three-year strategy period.

This report looks at Positive Futures' success in meeting the commitments set out in the strategy document before addressing the delivery of programmes and associated achievements of the young people involved. Following this, it outlines the wider work undertaken to build an infrastructure for the ongoing delivery of sports-based social inclusion work. Finally, as the third phase of the programme's development comes to a close, the report looks at the new opportunities presented as Positive Futures moves into its next phase of development.

Observing Positive Futures



Positive Futures employed a range of methods to monitor the programme's progress through the three-year strategy period. Before looking at its achievements, it is necessary to understand the methods used to monitor progress.

Most sports-based inclusion initiatives that aim to address young people's behaviour and personal development struggle to provide detailed 'hard' evidence of their impact. What evidence is available has often come from internal assessment or isolated independent evaluation. It has also generally been overly quantitative in its approach, providing short-term assessments with an inappropriate and overly narrow focus on the relationship between the initiatives and the reductions in offending behaviour.

Positive Futures is different. Through its commitment to the development of a comprehensive programme of research, monitoring and evaluation, Positive Futures clearly stands out from similar initiatives. However, while the programme is committed to collecting evidence of its achievements, it is equally interested in identifying ways of learning from the diverse range of agencies, staff and contexts in which its work is delivered. In some respects this gives the programme the status of an action research project guided, but not bound, by a strategic framework that provides a benchmark against which to make assessments and draw conclusions.

The research tools

To help create a more complete picture of its ongoing work and achievements, Positive Futures uses a wide range of evaluative tools. These generate programme-wide, point-in-time statistical data as well as more qualitative research and detailed long-term, localised information.

During the third phase of work, monitoring and evaluation relied, in the main, on four key tools

– the Key Elements Survey, Case Study Research, Young People's Views Research and the Survey of Partner Agencies – each of which has been used in the production of this report. Added to this, some local projects are also involved in their own independent monitoring and evaluation exercises.

The Key Elements Survey

The Key Elements Survey aims to gain an overview of project and programme-wide activity. The survey, presented as a questionnaire, is completed by the lead agencies running each Positive Futures project and returned by email. In this way, it collects a range of both quantitative and more descriptive information relating to:

- social profile of participants;
- key project and participant achievements;
- project developments;
- project partners;
- substance misuse prevention work; and
- future developments.

The survey has been conducted by MORI every six months during the three-year strategy period and has achieved a consistent response rate of between 97 per cent and 100 per cent.

Case Study Research

The Case Study Research aims to provide a detailed qualitative account of the development, organisation and impact of local Positive Futures projects. It is focused on seven projects in Yorkshire, Merseyside and South London, which reflect the diversity of organisational and delivery cultures within the Positive Futures programme.



The research, which began in summer 2004, centres on the actual experiences of project staff, participants and local residents. Research reports are based around three principal areas:

- engagement and relationship building;
- organisational contexts and partnerships; and
- participant journeys and distance travelled.

A team from Sheffield Hallam University has led the research in collaboration with colleagues at Manchester Metropolitan University and Goldsmiths College, London.

Young People's Views Research

The Young People's Views Research aims to improve further the understanding of the relationship between the Positive Futures programme and the young people who participate in it. It is a multimedia project led by the London Multimedia Lab at the London School of Economics (LSE). The research involves:

- the production of video stories by groups of young people;
- audiovisual records of workshops in which young people screen and discuss their video productions; and
- textual reports produced by the LSE team.

The Survey of Partner Agencies

The Survey of Partner Agencies seeks to understand the successes and challenges associated with Positive Futures' partnership work. The survey, also known as the Survey of Partner and Community Organisations, is a questionnaire consisting mainly of closed questions posed to a sample of project partners by agency staff using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). The response rate consistently exceeds 70 per cent of those partner agencies approached. MORI conducted the survey every 12 months throughout the three-year strategy period.

The reporting mechanisms

Positive Futures has consistently reported on the progress of its work and the outcomes of its comprehensive monitoring and evaluation tools. Between 2003 and 2006, it published three annual impact reports. Two progress reports that draw on the full range of research and monitoring tools have also been produced each summer, supplementing the impact reports.

Additionally, the initial findings from the Case Study Research have been presented in two subject-specific interim reports, focusing on engagement and relationship building in June 2005, and on organisational contexts and partnerships in January 2006. A final report is due in autumn 2006. All findings from the Case Study Research are available on the research project website at www.positivefuturesresearch.org.uk

All research reports associated with Positive Futures and reports of findings produced by MORI, including sample copies of the Key Elements Survey, are available on the Positive Futures website at www.positivefutures.gov.uk

Positive Futures is also associated with an occasional programme of seminars and conferences linked to the dissemination of research findings and the discussion of new approaches to delivery.



Assessing the impact: programme commitments and key achievements



Initially launched in March 2000, Positive Futures is now at the end of the third phase of its development. During this phase, the number of projects and range of activity has considerably expanded, along with a broadening of the national support structures.

The third phase of Positive Futures expanded to include the roll-out of 37 new projects by the Drug Strategy Directorate and a further 19 projects by the Football Foundation. Existing projects have also developed, increasing the volume of their work with 17 to 19 year olds to help create routes from Positive Futures into education, training and employment.

However, nationally Positive Futures has never been concerned with creating projects just to ensure the provision of activities for young people. Rather, as defined in *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, Positive Futures is a 'relationship strategy', using sport and other activities to establish relationships with young people who are regarded as being 'socially marginalised'. As set out in the strategy document, Positive Futures has an alternative perspective towards the social uses of sport, which breaks with conventional sporting and youth justice models of social development:

*'The Positive Futures programme has been built up around young people's involvement in sporting activity but it is not concerned with the celebration, development or promotion of sport as an end in itself. Nor does it merely attempt to use sport as a simple 'diversion' or alternative to time spent engaging in drug use and crime. Positive Futures is a relationship strategy based on the principle that engagement through sport and the building of mutual respect and trust can provide cultural 'gateways' to alternative lifestyles.'*²

Profile of participants

The findings from the sixth and latest Key Elements Survey show that by September 2005 a total of 109,546 young people had been

involved in regular Positive Futures project activities since the programme began monitoring participation in this way in 2002. This included 26,586 young people who had engaged in regular activities since the fifth Key Elements Survey in February 2005. The influx of new participants is more than double the increase recorded in the last survey and demonstrates the growing interest in the programme among young people. Even taking into account the additional large summer holiday programmes, this figure still marks a significant increase compared with the equivalent survey in September 2004, which recorded 21,233 new regular participants.

The new participants have brought the total number of young people who are currently regularly accessing project activities to 46,674. This means that, on average, Positive Futures projects are regularly engaging 449 young people, up from 263 recorded in the last Key Elements Survey. More significantly, it also shows that 43 per cent of participants (20,088 young people) have remained engaged in regular activities for at least the last six months.

Although the majority of the 26,586 new participants are aged 13 to 16, the increase in participants aged 17 or over identified in the last survey has been maintained. This reflects the commitment to working with this age group which was highlighted in *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* and is shown by the older profile of the Phase 3 projects. On average, 29 per cent of Phase 3 project participants are aged 17 or over, compared with only 12 per cent or 13 per cent for earlier phases.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- A total of 109,546 young people have been involved in regular Positive Futures project activities since 2002
- Fifty-six new projects have been rolled out in Phase 3
- The proportion of 17 to 19 year olds has risen from 5 per cent in February 2003 to 18 per cent in September 2005

² Home Office (2003) *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, p.8

The number of girls and young women participating in Positive Futures projects also continues to climb. Female participants now account for 34 per cent of attendees, with the newest Phase 3 projects having the most equal gender balance of 37 per cent of participants being female. This more balanced profile appears to confirm an ongoing and accelerating trend, although at Football Foundation-funded projects the proportion of male participants has risen to 83 per cent.

Projects continue to attract young people from fairly diverse ethnic backgrounds. The average number of participants from each ethnic group is broadly consistent with previous findings,

with a slight decrease in the average number of young people from white ethnic groups and a slight increase in the average number of young people from black ethnic groups.

Widening the profile

The profile statistics reveal something of the extent to which Positive Futures has managed to develop its appeal to young people across age, gender and ethnic groups. Acknowledging *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* recognition for 'local opportunities for personal development [to emerge] organically on the basis of what engages effectively',³ individual projects have displayed flexibility and imagination in order to remain attractive to target groups.

Table 1: Profile of participants currently engaged by Positive Futures

Total number of young people engaged in regular Positive Futures project activities since 2000	109,546
Number of young people currently engaged in regular Positive Futures activities	46,674
Number of new young people engaged in regular Positive Futures activities since February 2005	26,586
Gender of participants	
Male	19,609
Female	10,277
Age of participants when joining	
10–12 years old	4,947
13–16 years old	7,749
17 years and older	2,888
Ethnic group of participants	
White	10,562
Black	1,782
Asian	1,137
Mixed Black	1,025
Other	839
Irish	173
Mixed Asian	88

Source: MORI

Note: Some of the figures add up to more than the total number of new young people engaged in regular activities. It is likely that some projects have included all young people in their figures, not just new participants.

³Home Office (2003) *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, p.4

Gender

The steady growth in the number of girls and young women participating, which has increased from 21 per cent in February 2004 to 34 per cent in September 2005, can in part be attributed to projects responding to their needs. While some researchers have been more circumspect about the degree to which sport has embraced women's participation,⁴ there is almost universal support for the concept of encouraging greater involvement in Positive Futures by girls and young women.

Many projects have identified benefits in splitting activities by gender and running 'girls only' sessions, or in employing a member of staff specifically to engage young women. Projects have also acknowledged the importance of different activities, 'gender pull' and the need to work within these parameters. Sessions that are aimed at young women include dance in particular, while one project aimed to increase female participation by staging a 'girls' pamper day', involving yoga, nutritional awareness and health and beauty sessions at the local football club. Other projects have used the more conventional 'residential' to take girls and young women out of their usual environments.

However, several projects are willing to use whatever activities engage young women effectively and are successfully organising activities such as boxing. Indeed, one of the gyms used by the Kickstart project in South London has broken from its three-decade history as a male preserve by allowing young women to train there.

Ethnic group

As discussed earlier, projects continue to attract young people from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Nonetheless, the racial profile has not broadened to the same extent as the gender balance. Projects have maintained their commitment to working with a range of marginalised groups of young people, including travellers, asylum seekers



Case study: The Hit Man and Her

The Fisher Boxing Club manager was cynical about the inclusion of young women in training, not because he felt that they weren't capable, but because he thought they would distract the male boxers from their regimes. He readily admits that he has been proved wrong. Their inclusion is now so complete, new arrivals don't even blink at their presence.

But the young women have worked hard to achieve this. In order to be accepted, they've had to prove themselves capable and committed in this traditionally male environment. Having succeeded in this, they are rightly pleased with themselves, and relish the status this gives them. While they have worked hard to fit in with the gym, its specific codes of conduct and tough training practices (in training there is no distinction between the young women and young men), they have brought something of themselves and their femininity in through the door as well. At times, they behave differently from the other boxers. They talk and laugh with each other, they are sometimes teased by, or tease, some of the young men, but most noticeable is their close relationship with the coach. The women have carved out their own special status with him, and this is clearly reciprocated.

The young women are now fixtures at the club. They attend fights, train three times a week, take part in shows and fights, and are involved in coaching other younger or less experienced boxers. They express a strong sense of belonging to the club and unanimously agree that 'it is our lives'. But that's not all. In this gym, the women feel 'special', aware that they are forerunners in a traditionally male arena. And this culminates in a sense of achievement as a result of their involvement in boxing.

⁴Hargreaves, J. (1994) *Sporting females*, Routledge: London

ACHIEVEMENTS

This year:

- almost 600 participants have looked for a job, with a similar number gaining employment
- 343 young people have begun volunteering at Positive Futures projects
- over 4,000 participants have signed up for, or completed, awards or training through Positive Futures

and refugees, even though the proportions of non-white participants have remained relatively stable.

However, the proportion of participants from minority ethnic groups across the programme continues to be far in excess of the proportion of the UK population as a whole. There is only cause for concern in those few localities where the ethnic profile of participants does not reflect that of the local community. In these areas, any imbalance may in part be related to the ways in which particular projects have deliberately focused their attention on working with specific ethnic groups rather than adopting a more integrationist approach.

The Case Study Research has revealed how some projects utilise distinct delivery agencies, with strong ties to their respective communities, to work with young people from different ethnic groups. This pragmatic approach allows early contact with different groups, ensuring that projects reach all sections of the community. However, projects should be aware that such an approach can sometimes reinforce local divisions, and can lead to a lack of flexibility and cultural sensitivity across the different elements of provision, effectively preventing any significant shift in the ethnic profile of participants. It also has the potential to reinforce the problems associated with identifying young people by their race. This conflicts with Positive Futures' aim to open up the possibility for cultural exchange and progressive pathways to emerge.

Age

More positively, there has been a dramatic response to the direct commitment in *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* to expand provision with a particular focus on work with 17 to 19 year olds through new Phase 3 projects and existing projects located in high crime areas. The proportion of participants in this age group has now risen from 5 per cent in February 2003 to 18 per cent in September 2005. As well as responding to central guidance, projects are also attracting the older

age groups through the range of activities on offer and, perhaps more crucially, the connection to wider personal development opportunities such as volunteering, training and employment.

Widening activities and opportunities

While football remains by far the most commonly organised and popular activity, there is a wide range of other activities on offer, some of which appeal to particular target groups. Indeed, there are now 24 sports being delivered, which each have over 600 young people regularly participating.⁵ These range from mainstream sports such as basketball, swimming, cricket, athletics, hockey, golf, badminton, rugby, tennis and netball to more specialist sports and activities such as pool, snooker, boxing, fishing, skateboarding, aerobics, kayaking and weight training. Access to these sports and activities is increasingly linked to the creation of local leagues, tournaments and competitions in order to maintain levels of interest and open progression routes to more organised sports. Added to this, more innovative activities, such as film making, bike and motor maintenance, drama, music and DJing, are being developed to widen Positive Futures' appeal. By delivering these activities during the evening and at weekends as well as at more conventional times, projects make every effort to make the sessions more attractive and accessible.

As a result of this breadth of provision, since March 2005, 1,667 young people have joined a club and are playing sport, with another 467 young people involved in 'other' sporting activities. This is a substantially higher number than recorded in the previous Key Elements Survey, when 928 young people had become involved in a sports club or an affiliated sport over a similar period.

However, the very title of the Positive Futures strategy document, *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, implies that the programme has a role to play in opening up opportunities for personal development and widening participants' horizons.

⁵ Key Elements 6, MORI



Case study: Austin's powers

It is in this sense that Positive Futures is not concerned with sport for its own sake. Success is not measured in terms of teams created, trophies won or sporting stars discovered. Rather, it is concerned with the development of people. But individual 'progress' is an intensely personal concept that can be difficult to measure and record. Therefore, Positive Futures tries to generate pathways that link activities to opportunities for accreditation, training and, ultimately, employment.

It is the participation in regular activities, and the role of staff as advisers and trusted mentors, that seems to bring changes in attitude and foster new aspirations in young people. Many use their involvement in activities to develop skills and opportunities for employment in the sports and related sectors. Between March and September 2005, almost 600 participants began looking for a job, with a similar number obtaining either full or part-time employment (216 and 367 young people respectively). A further 343 young people began volunteering at Positive Futures projects, with another 166 having found other opportunities for voluntary work. In this way it has become clear that participants can often determine their own level of engagement. Many participants end up doing a number of training programmes as staff look to provide them with further challenges.

Young people become volunteers, and ultimately gain employment, through training and the example and encouragement of the staff they have contact with. In this sense, projects help young people make positive life choices from a variety of options.

Transitions, as illustrated by Austin's story (see case study right), are undoubtedly helped by access to the full range of training and educational opportunities made available by Positive Futures projects. Between March and September 2005, over 4,000 participants signed up for, or completed, awards or training.⁶ Added impetus for this came in 2005 with the publication

Twenty-year-old Austin came into contact with the Keighley Positive Futures project two years ago. His parents had separated and, although he sat various exams at school, he decided that it wouldn't be worthwhile collecting his results.

Austin joined a football session and immediately became a regular player and team member. He struck up a relationship with a project worker who encouraged him to go for the Soccer Star Award. Gaining confidence from the award, Austin exclaimed 'they couldn't hold me back!'. He moved on to a Junior Sports Leader Award before taking an FA Level One coaching course. After this course, Austin confided to staff that he is dyslexic. This encouraged workers to redouble their efforts to support him in the written elements of his accreditation.

While Austin had not secured steady employment after leaving school, being forced to pick up exploitative casual labouring jobs, he now found part-time work at a local store. In his free time over the summer holiday, Austin volunteered to help with local football projects. Along with his father, who has also become a volunteer, he now leads the running of a local Positive Futures-supported football team and has secured paid employment with the Youth Service. He has also been offered a position to work alongside a Positive Futures worker.

The staff value his 'localness', saying how this helps him attract participants from the nearby estate, as well as his ability to provide an example to local lads of what they might achieve.

Austin chats knowledgeably and comfortably with these local lads. He also spoke at a recent gathering of senior practitioners in the area, telling them his 'story'.

Austin has also now recognised the need to re-visit school and collect his results as he faces up to the future.

⁶3,148 young people have signed up for or completed awards, and another 867 have signed up for or completed training programmes.

of *Raising the bar*,⁷ a step-by-step guide for practitioners considering accreditation as part of their work with young people in non-formal education settings. In keeping with the wider developmental approach of Positive Futures, rather than emphasising accreditation for its own sake, the publication is concerned that everything from ‘planning’ through to ‘completion’ is seen by staff as an opportunity to engage with participants and enhance their personal and social development. The guide has helped to bring some clarity to the confusing subject of awards.

The most widespread awards gained by participants are the sports achievement and tournament awards, with 336 young people gaining these. A growing number of participants have taken the Community Sports Leader Award and Junior Sports Leader Award, with 328 young people involved in September 2005, compared with 192 in February 2005. Another 244 participants have taken part in football coaching awards, which continue to predominate over other coaching awards, as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Awards and training, March–September 2005

	Participants	Projects
Awards (signed up for and/or obtained)		
Sports achievement or tournament awards	336	14
Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA)/Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA)	328	24
Football coaching/FA coaching award	244	22
Education-based, including college courses/scholarships/apprenticeships	205	6
Youth Achievement Award	200	8
First aid	197	10
Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network Youth Award	179	9
Duke of Edinburgh	167	13
National Open College Network	166	8
Watersports	98	9
Other sports coaching	88	6
Health and safety	32	2
Other awards	210	13
Training (signed up for and/or undergoing)		
‘Firebreak’ scheme	246	1
Other sports coaching/training	154	11
Football coaching	77	9
Other training	68	12
CSLA/SLA/JSLA	66	5
Mentoring	60	1
Outdoor activities	56	2
Education-based	44	11
First aid	6	2

Source: MORI

1. Table lists more commonly undertaken awards and training programmes, and is not an exhaustive list.
2. These figures are likely to double-count some individuals who may have undertaken several awards/training sessions.

⁷ Home Office (2005) *Raising the bar: Positive Futures’ guide to accreditation*

Table 3: Relationship developments March–September 2005

	Total number of young people	Average number of young people	Base
Engagement			
Improved engagement with Positive Futures	4,560	56	82
Social relations			
Improved relations with family	1,237	18	67
Improved relations with peers	2,037	30	67
Improved relations at care home	276	4	67
Other social relations improvement	673	10	67
Nothing to date			
Too early to have achieved anything	2,636	39	67
Left project before achieving anything	637	10	67
Hasn't attended often enough in last six months to have achieved anything	937	14	67

Source: MORI

There also appears to be an increase in the number of young people accessing education and more general youth development-based awards via Positive Futures. These are emerging as some of the most popular awards, with, for example, 205 young people having been involved in GCSE and other educational awards and 200 in Youth Achievement Awards. This is likely to be a result of educational providers becoming more established and widespread partners, a development reported by many projects. These partnerships are particularly important as they can provide opportunities for structured and purposeful activity, and for developing skills to build confidence and motivation.

Positive Futures projects seem to be effectively supporting education, both by helping young people return to education, and by improving participants' attitudes towards learning. The latest Key Elements Survey found that within the last six months 736 young people had returned to full-time education since they became involved with Positive Futures (an average of 8 per project), and 1,756 were doing better in school.

Elsewhere the focus has been on 'engagement' – getting young people to take part, and learning and playing as part of a group. For example, one project has identified progress by the fact that the majority of young people at a local school are now actively taking part in PE sessions instead of sitting out. Although this progression is tangible, it is only visible if it is looked at in context. It is also difficult to record without the qualitative forms of monitoring used by Positive Futures.

However, it is this sort of positive development that staff often value the most. As one project worker commented:

'These are the things we call "soft outcomes", you know, these are the things that [other] funders won't notice or won't want to track, like they want to track how often they're coming and if they do turn up, but they don't want to track the soft outcomes, the fact that [a young person] came but they never really spoke to anyone or they never smiled at anyone, but the next time they come they actually did, they smiled, they spoke a few words. These are the soft outcomes.'

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This year:

- 736 participants returned to full-time education and 1,756 were doing better in school
- Positive Futures staff perceive that over 2,000 young people have improved their relations with peers
- Positive Futures staff perceive that 1,237 participants have made progress with their family relations

This kind of progress relies on staff establishing relationships with young people, learning about them and their lives, rather than on establishing formal progression routes.

It is clear from the latest Key Elements Survey that Positive Futures projects often lead to a range of positive social outcomes for young people. Experiencing regular activities and teamwork, and building relationships with coaches, staff and mentors, all appear to play a part in addressing the social problems faced by participants. In the most recent survey of lead agencies, over 2,000 young people (2,037) have improved their relations with peers,⁸ a further 1,237 have made progress in family relations, and the numbers of young people with improved relations at care homes is up, from only 90 young people in February 2005, to 276. The increase of young people improving their relations with families and care homes may indicate that as the scope of their work increases, projects are finding more effective ways to link their work with young people's wider lives.

While encouraging, these across-the-board increases in reported outcomes probably reflect the overall increase in numbers of young people taking part in Positive Futures projects. Indeed, the comparatively high numbers of young people where it is thought to be 'too early to have achieved anything' (currently 2,636 compared to 1,361 in February 2005) emphasises a likely impact of large numbers of new joiners – that immediate outcomes will be 'watered down', at least temporarily.

The Survey of Partner Agencies has also revealed the ways in which project partners feel the programme is delivering a whole raft of benefits to young people in terms of the *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* focus on personal development and aspirations. Ninety per cent of partners perceive

that young people's involvement in Positive Futures is making them better able to relate to others, 88 per cent that they have increased skills and competencies. Similar numbers cite benefits in terms of personal development, believing that participants are benefiting from a change in attitude (87 per cent), raised aspirations (86 per cent) and better awareness of their own abilities and difficulties (83 per cent).

Of particular significance is the number of project partners who perceive that more benefits are available to participants than two years ago, with 57 per cent believing that young people are being helped to gain qualifications. This is a marked increase from 33 per cent in 2003 when there was a much sharper focus on personal development.

Partners have also generally agreed that Positive Futures makes a difference beyond the young people they work with directly, impacting on the key aims of having 'a positive influence on participants' substance misuse, physical activity and offending behaviour':

- 50 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to drug use (up from 42 per cent last year).
- The proportion of project partners who believe the projects make a positive difference to the availability of sports activities has increased from 69 per cent in 2003 to 90 per cent in 2005.
- 76 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to anti-social behaviour (up from 72 per cent in 2004). A quarter of project partners consider Positive Futures to make the most difference on this measure.
- 68 per cent of project partners believe that the projects make a positive difference to local crime rates (up from 63 per cent in 2004).

⁸Since the reporting of these improvements is based upon the observations of Positive Futures project staff, relations with peers will generally be the most widely reported improvement. This is because changes at home are less likely to be seen first-hand by Positive Futures staff.

Substance misuse prevention

Part of Positive Futures' remit is to address issues around body image, health and substance use, at both physical and emotional levels. It is clear from both the Key Elements Survey and the Case Study Research that a variety of approaches are being used across the range of projects. These include the following.

Informal discussion

This remains the most widespread 'core' practice for addressing substance misuse. The flexibility of this approach allows staff to raise issues and pass on information alongside activities as and when the opportunity arises. Many projects comment on the importance of this being done in the context of established relationships; trust between staff and young people is vital to support effective discussion. Exactly how these discussions are built in varies. For some projects it is a matter of ensuring that staff are well informed, and often trained (typically to Tier 2 or Tier 3 level of the four tiers of support identified in the Health Advisory Service Review, 2001) so they can be confident in speaking to groups or individuals where issues arise, or where they have concerns. Other projects take a slightly more formal approach, setting aside time around sessions or activities to discuss such issues.

Providing leaflets and information

Projects make sure that participants have access to a wide range of information leaflets and posters at project offices or activity venues. This ensures that young people are aware of local agencies offering further support and advice on substance misuse. Staff can also use these leaflets and posters to support their discussions with young people.

Referrals and access to specialist support

Many projects back up these approaches, which aim to provide information and advice to young



people, with established procedures for referrals where more intensive support is needed.

Projects continue to report progress in arranging effective referral procedures (both from substance misuse agencies to Positive Futures and vice versa), and also in establishing new partnerships with local drugs agencies.

Workshops and presentations on substance misuse

A wide range of external agencies and partners are involved in providing regular or ad hoc sessions on substance and alcohol misuse to Positive Futures projects. Local Drug Action Teams (DATs), Drug and Alcohol Action Teams (DAATs), Connexions and youth services are often involved, along with a wide range of local drugs agencies and projects. These sessions help put young people in contact with local groups and agencies that can be approached for advice or support.

Healthy living programmes

Many projects build substance misuse into wider-ranging programmes on healthy living and personal development. These typically try to make young people consider the effects of drugs through

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- There are now 24 sports being delivered, which each have over 600 young people regularly participating
- 43 per cent of participants (20,088 young people) have remained engaged in regular activities for at least the last six months



impacts on their general health and sporting ability. The health and performance impacts of cutting down on smoking, drinking or other substance misuse can be used as a powerful way to get young people to recognise substance misuse effects on their lifestyle, health and prospects.

Creative projects

Many projects are using creative activities and projects to engage young people with substance misuse issues. Positive Futures projects involving filmmaking, dance, drama or design allow young

people to explore their own experience or issues in this area. These projects also involve an element of performance or publicity, allowing young people to pass on their ideas about substance misuse to their peers or the community.

One-day events, fairs or open days

During holiday programmes, many projects run events including sports activities along with sessions on substance misuse, or offering access to local partner agencies dealing with substance misuse.

While most of these approaches involve some level of involvement from partner agencies, in projects that are led by agencies which offer services to young people who use drugs, project staff are ideally placed to both identify and address issues of substance misuse. Where Positive Futures is fully integrated into such a service, young people with substance misuse problems can be linked to Positive Futures activities where they will have contact with staff who can talk to them about the effects of substances. This might trigger a wider intervention to help them address their usage.

The table below summarises the key organisations typically involved in the different approaches to addressing substance misuse.

Table 4: Substance misuse activities

Type of activity	Agencies involved
Informal discussions between staff and young people	Positive Futures staff, mentors, coaches, Drug Action Team (DAT) workers, Youth Offending Team (YOT) workers, youth services
Drug awareness training for staff	DATs, local drugs services, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)
Leaflets	Local drugs services, FRANK materials, health services, Entry to Employment (E2E), police
Workshop	Largely external agencies, typically DATs, YOTs, youth services, Connexions, schools, colleges, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs)
Theatre/performance/arts	Drugs charities, youth services, DATs, 'The Wright Stuff' theatre group
Games and quizzes	Positive Futures, DATs, local drugs services/projects

Source: MORI



Case study: Michaela's lifeline

Michaela wanted to stop using heroin and approached Lifeline in 2002. She was put on a methadone programme and, despite the occasional lapse, stabilised. She had a good relationship with her family, who were unaware of her substance use, but her then boyfriend was also using heroin.

Michaela's key worker looked at a number of issues with her, including drugs education and healthy eating, and helped her to identify a number of personal goals. Her key worker was also keen to engage her with Positive Futures as soon as possible to help fill some of the social gaps created by moving away from using drugs.

Michaela describes her involvement with Positive Futures as 'the best thing' and tells of how she has much more self-esteem. She has also enjoyed the opportunity to be creative at dance sessions, helping to select tracks and choreograph: 'I've got this brilliant track and I've just been into town to get the version which I can play at the session' (the original came with a parental advisory sticker). She has gained National Open College Network (NOCN) accreditation via the dance sessions and has also taken part in music sessions, writing and singing.

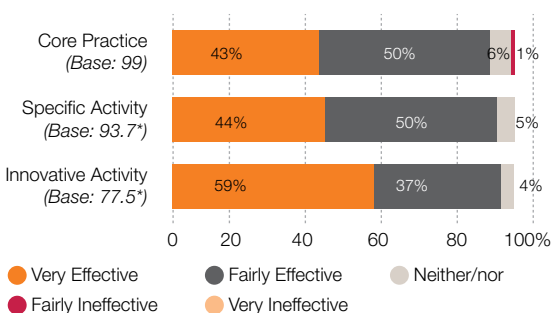
Positive Futures referred Michaela to the Prince's Trust where she enrolled on a fashion design course. She is currently working part time and, although she is aware that support is available to her via the lead agency, she no longer attends, feeling that her life is now 'back on track'.

It is clearly difficult to assess the effectiveness of each of these activities, particularly as many projects do not differentiate between the range of activities they employ. However, projects have attempted to assess the effectiveness of their own different levels of practice, categorising them as 'core', 'specific' or 'innovative' activities. The chart below illustrates these different levels, and their perceived effectiveness.

Confidence in projects' core and specific activities remains stable and high, with 93 per cent and 94 per cent respectively feeling these are very or fairly effective. Only 1 per cent feel that their core practices are ineffective. The innovative activities are, however, increasingly being seen as the most effective approach. Almost all projects feel that these are effective (96 per cent, up 8 per cent since the last survey), with over half (59 per cent) feeling they are proving very effective.

Although these are the projects' perceptions rather than demonstrable outcomes, they do demonstrate a growing confidence among Positive Futures projects that they do have the capacity to deliver effective substance misuse interventions.

EFFECTIVENESS OF SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION WORK (%)



Base: All Projects that gave examples.
 *Some projects sent several returns, recording results for different branches etc. To ensure all projects answers had equal weight, these were combined, creating some decimal base sizes.

Source: MORI

Summary of achievements

In *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, Positive Futures set itself some ambitious goals. Almost three years on it is clear that, with the help of the support framework developed by the national team and reviewed in the following sections, much has been delivered.

- As of September 2005, a total of 109,546 young people have been involved in regular Positive Futures project activities since the programme began monitoring participation in this way in 2002.
- Thirty-seven new projects have been rolled out through the Drug Strategy Directorate and a further 19 projects by the Football Foundation.
- In response to the direct commitment to expand provision focusing on 17 to 19 year olds, the proportion of participants in this age group has risen from 5 per cent in February 2003 to 18 per cent in September 2005.
- On the basis of the need for 'local opportunities for personal development [to emerge] organically on the basis of what engages effectively':
 - there are now 24 sports being delivered, which each have over 600 young people regularly participating;
 - the proportion of female participants has grown to 34 per cent; and
 - 43 per cent of participants (20,088 young people) have remained engaged in regular activities for at least the last six months.
- In the context of the *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*' definition of Positive Futures as a 'relationship strategy', between March and September 2005:
 - almost 600 participants began looking for a job, with a similar number having actually obtained employment;
 - 343 young people began volunteering at Positive Futures projects, with another 166 volunteering elsewhere;
 - over 4,000 participants signed up for, or completed, awards or training through Positive Futures projects;
 - 736 participants returned to full-time education and 1,756 were doing better in school since they became involved with Positive Futures;
 - Positive Futures staff perceive that over 2,000 young people have improved their relations with peers; and
 - Positive Futures staff perceive that 1,237 participants have made progress with their family relations.
- In terms of the ultimate key aim of Positive Futures, 'to have a positive influence on participants' substance misuse, physical activity and offending behaviour':
 - 50 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to drug use;
 - 90 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to the availability of sports activities;
 - 76 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to anti-social behaviour; and
 - 68 per cent of project partners believe that Positive Futures makes a positive difference to local crime rates.



Building a new infrastructure for sport-based social initiatives



Positive Futures achievements during the last three years were built on the development of a clear strategic framework, as concerned with building the delivery capacity of projects as with its vision for the positive development of disadvantaged young people.

The strategy document *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* identified four distinct areas that need development to make sure projects are sustained long after their initial funding streams cease:

- a Workforce Quality Initiative;
- appropriate lead agencies;
- strong effective local partnerships linked to regional strategies; and
- a central monitoring and evaluation framework.

It was suggested that sustainable projects would be characterised by a layered structure where workers have the skills to engage participants; lead agencies have the credibility and flexibility to support work programme delivery; project aims interface with partnership and wider social inclusion policy agendas; and monitoring and evaluation reveals whether objectives have been met.

The Workforce Quality Initiative

Cul-de-sacs and gateways argued that at the heart of the Positive Futures approach lies 'the community sports coach, since part of the attraction of sports-led social interventions is the delivery agents' possession of a much respected and sought after level of skill and ability'.⁹

However, the Case Study Research has revealed that there is no such thing as an archetype 'community sports coach'. Rather, projects are characterised by a disparate array of staff with distinct skills and backgrounds. Despite the diversity, a range of staff identities or 'characters' is beginning to emerge, as outlined in Table 5 overleaf.

These characterisations are indicative of the strategy document's distinction between what it defined as 'lifeskills' and 'learned skills'. While staff may play to or utilise different aspects of these character types – or even occupy a number of positions simultaneously depending on the group they are working with – each of the projects is defined by its employment of staff from a variety of social and professional backgrounds. However, a strong division is emerging between participants and members of staff who are from their area and those who are not. Although the 'localness' of staff is not the only factor at work here, those staff who have a deep knowledge of the history of their areas and who have or had a similar social background to participants seem able to make stronger connections with the young people and command more respect.

While the strategy document identified the centrality of the 'community sports coach', it has become clear that the 'sport' element is not of overriding importance. There are staff without sports skills who are able to build relationships with participants, while others, despite their mastery of an activity, do not. This is backed up by the Survey of Partner Agencies, which revealed the wide range of skills that project partners see as important. The skills that they identify as most significant are those that allow staff to engage, relate to and influence young people. Indeed, the ability to cope with challenging behaviour and to motivate and enthuse participants is most widely seen as 'very important' (91 per cent and 90 per cent respectively). Almost as significant is the ability of staff to empathise with and understand the factors that impact upon vulnerable young

⁹ Home Office (2003) *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, p.4

Table 5: Positive Futures staff character types

Character	Role and skills
The boss	The senior member of staff. Serious and businesslike but friendly and willing to listen. Occasionally involved in delivery but generally one step removed.
The buddy	Keen to involve all participants, reaching out to those who aren't joining in and relating to everyone on their level.
The teacher	An essential part of the 'deal' of participation but often viewed as militating against the fun of sessions by participants. A facilitator conducting head counts, taking registers and completing monitoring forms in sessions. Also likely to lead on securing accreditation and developmental pathways.
The joker	Engages with participants across age ranges and genders. May have a particular sporting skill but makes use of personality before expertise. The joker is uninhibited and transmits an enthusiasm for activities not by leading sessions but by being a part of them.
Mr Cool	Sometimes less immediately engaging, it is their 'aura' – based on locally valued knowledge of what's in and what's out, how to look and how not to look, and embracement of youth culture – which appeals.
The geezer	Currency is based on a more immediate identification with the locality and social background of participants. The geezer's engagement is defined by the social outlook of participants and the fact that they are 'known'. While harsher and more competitive than the 'buddy', in a dispute with authority the geezer will almost always say the young people are right.
The expert	Sessional worker who is employed specifically for their possession of a sporting skill rather than traditional youth work skills.

people (88 per cent and 86 per cent respectively). Interestingly, while 79 per cent also emphasised the importance of their ability to gain the respect of young people, only 29 per cent regarded 'street credibility' as 'very important', suggesting the significance of a genuine connection between participants and staff rather than stylised performance. Similarly, while still thought of as 'important' by high proportions of partners, only 22 per cent regarded sporting ability and 40 per cent coaching ability as 'very important'.

The responses of partner agencies and the Case Study Research suggest that, although successful relationship building may be assisted by sports competency, it is primarily driven by the young people's identification with the social background

and approach of staff, regardless of their sporting prowess.

Nevertheless, as last year's impact report *Staying in touch*¹⁰ revealed, the national programme has long recognised that personality and life experiences are not sufficient qualities for the delivery of a strategically-led sports-based social inclusion programme. Therefore, Positive Futures has developed a comprehensive programme of training in line with the skills base identified in the strategy document. Now in its third year, the Workforce Quality Initiative (WQI) builds on the existing skills of Positive Futures workers and helps them develop the practical competence they need to work safely and effectively in their unique environments.

¹⁰ Home Office (2005) *Positive Futures impact report: Staying in touch*



The WQI objectives are to:

- identify the National Occupational Standards Positive Futures staff should be working to;
- assess staff performance, knowledge and skills to identify any training and development needs;
- provide relevant and targeted training and activities;
- evaluate the development of Positive Futures staff; and
- record and recognise the achievements of Positive Futures staff.

WQI is managed by Management and Performance Solutions Ltd and is underpinned by their 'Performer' software. Individual staff begin the process by attending a half-day workshop. Here they create and refine their role profile (the units of National Occupational Standards relevant to their work roles). Staff are asked to prioritise up to four units that are particularly

important to their work but about which they are not 100 per cent confident. They then assess themselves against their prioritised units to confirm their strengths and identify any gaps in their knowledge and skills. This also indicates ways in which they need to adapt their performance to bring it in line with the benchmarks of good practice described in the National Occupational Standards.

During 2004/05, WQI provided a series of workshops focused on developing the following core competences:

- engaging with, working with, supporting and protecting young people;
- preparing, leading, concluding and reviewing sports and activity sessions;
- raising awareness of substances and their effects, and helping young people address their substance misuse;

The geezer

The geezer is no 'jack the lad', telling tall tales about his exploits between sessions. He is local to his bones. Speaking of a colleague who comes from a different social background and is not from the project area, he says, 'It's alright for them. They can go home at night, but I live here in the heart of it. I know these lads. I want to see them progress.' He knows the geography of the area, he knows which families live on which estates, he has friends he grew up with who are willing to give a participant a work trial based on his recommendation.

Chatting while he leans against a litter bin, smoking a cigarette, our conversations are usually punctuated by arm waving, flurries of fag ash and strong language. He used to run a pub, a focal point of many communities,

and laughs when asked if the mobile disco he owns plays 'proper stuff'. 'Aye,' he says, 'Abba, YMCA – proper stuff.'

His appearance is not carefully cultivated: face full of stubble, shirt hanging out of creased tracksuit bottoms, he is the antithesis of celebrity endorsed notions of 'cool'. His style is functional. It reflects a willingness to drop what he is doing to take over at a session if someone is off sick, just pulling an old T-shirt out of his holdall before he claps his hands tighter and throws himself into the activity. Many participants will tell him that they've seen him during the week outside Positive Futures, whether it was out shopping or having a drink. Stand outside the leisure centre and drivers beep their horns and wave. He knows them all.



- dealing with abusive and aggressive behaviour; and
- managing projects and delivering quality to stakeholders' requirements.

Post-workshop reassessments allowed staff to evaluate the impact of their training on their performance and identify future developmental needs. Because significant improvements were identified in most of the core areas, the 2005/06 workshop programme is now focused on the following, more advanced topics:

- effective time management;
- managing your team's performance;
- helping young people tackle their criminal and substance-using behaviour;
- counselling young people;
- recognising indications of substance misuse and referring individuals to specialists;
- positive behaviour management training; and
- communication and information management.

All workshops are available to both Positive Futures staff and people working on other similar sport-based initiatives.

Internal evaluation and observations from the Case Study Research team suggest that the workshops have been generally well received. However, both trainers and staff have expressed surprise that, while the workshops assume people can manage, few have previously received actual management training of the type now being delivered by Positive Futures. The training has undoubtedly had an impact in terms of the level of staff expertise and confidence.

Some delegates have questioned the initial lack of accreditation or certificates associated with attendance and the lasting value of the training. In response, there have been two significant developments.

Firstly, Positive Futures, in partnership with SkillsActive (Sector Skills Council for Leisure and Active Learning), has developed two accredited training courses which are now being delivered across the country by Chartstage Training and the London Community Sports Network. These courses, which focus on delivering sport and physical activity within deprived communities, are:

From lifeskills to learned skills

Project worker Nathan is not from a youth work or substance misuse background. He has spent his working life in skilled manual employment where he has gained many of the lifeskills necessary to engage with young people. However, he was aware that he lacked specialist knowledge in other areas and was keen to increase his skills.

Although Nathan had attended a variety of training sessions run by different providers, Nathan's WQI 'Performer' evaluation indicated

that he should attend sessions on basic drug awareness; supporting individuals who are drug misusers; assessing and acting upon immediate risk of danger to substance misusers; and management of abusive and aggressive behaviour.

And did he benefit from the courses? 'Yeah, they were all really useful. I would have liked the drugs stuff to have more local relevance, but I did some other training at a local project so I could learn about local issues.'

- the Award in Community Sports Work; and
- the Award in Managing Community Sport.

Secondly, in partnership with Skills for Justice (the Sector Skills Council for Criminal and Community Justice), Positive Futures is piloting a Continuing Development Award in Substance Misuse (Young People). The award includes units from both the Youth Justice and Health and Social Care NVQs. Its purpose is to develop the capacity and skills of mainstream and specialist staff working with young people who are misusing substances. The award is intended to be flexible enough to meet the needs of staff who span the criminal

justice, healthcare, education and leisure sectors. The pilot, which currently includes a selection of London Positive Futures projects, will produce both qualified front-line staff and assessors by spring 2006. It is planned to roll out the award nationally from April 2006, with all front-line staff included by March 2008.

Appropriate lead agencies

The *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* strategy document places a very heavy emphasis on the need for projects to be both 'credible' and 'flexible' in the ways in which they organise their work. In attempting to clarify how effective lead agencies

Example: Whistle while we work

The third phase of the North Liverpool project, unburdened by the weight of institutional bureaucracy, has a culture of co-operation, flexibility and equity which runs through its approach. It seeks to respond to government policy agendas without committing to externally imposed public sector management models. The organisational culture that underpins this freedom helps create the space for operational autonomy and innovative practice among front-line staff.

All five full-time members of staff are located within the same office, which is characterised by an inviting feeling created by personal pictures, artefacts, posters and the radio playing in the background. Within this 'easiness' sits a hive of last-minute bid writing, development work, planning and organising which often runs late into the evening. The flexible working hours are accompanied by the encouragement given to staff to manage their own workload and office time. Where staff do not 'come up to scratch', training and development is applied rather than a punitive approach.

This flexible, open and friendly culture is not only inward facing but is also demonstrated outwards to the young people and project partners. Young people visit the office space to hang out and chat to the team, have 'take-away' evenings and watch project-related DVDs. Local community groups also access the facility as a free meeting space. Meanwhile, the project's development officers are left to develop their activities autonomously and spend most of their time out of the office in the areas in which they work. While there are team meetings when staff relay their plans and current activities, the process of communication and feedback is largely informal and played out through the everyday rhythms of office discussion. This practice-led approach is supported by the more formal monthly steering group meetings, providing an opportunity to feed back to stakeholders, seek support in the form of resources, staff time or advice, and request approval for major forthcoming initiatives.

might be identified, it highlighted a number of features to help projects achieve 'credibility amongst partner agencies'. These included the need to be:

- independent and innovative;
- organisationally transparent;
- co-operative and non-duplicating;
- providing value for money;
- receiving funding from a range of sources; and
- capable of growth.

As the many and varied Positive Futures projects inevitably display these qualities to lesser or greater degrees, it is not possible, or even desirable, to define an 'ideal type' of lead agency. However, through close observation of seven projects, the Case Study Research has identified a number of barriers and enablers in relation to the organisational characteristics. These are presented in Table 6.

Rather than identifying a model that all agencies might adopt, the Case Study Research has revealed that good work can be facilitated by appropriate structures and particular ways of working. While any agency might be able to do this work well, confirming the trends identified in last year's interim report, the best chance of success comes where initiatives have developed 'organically' – through continuous adaptation on the basis of interaction with participants. As such, those agencies who promote and enable a style of working characterised by structural independence, a willingness to innovate, flexibility, passion, a desire to enhance provision and an intensive, long-term, participant-focused delivery style are ideally suited to the task.

In line with this, the Case Study Research findings suggest that community-based voluntary sector groups typically have organisational structures that are much more likely to fit with the ideal characteristics identified in Table 6. Although voluntary sector status does not provide any

guarantee that a project will be successful, it does provide a structural framework and degree of independence. This enables projects to generate forms of working which are:

- small scale;
- locally based;
- well resourced and dynamic; and
- with no single area of work dominating.

Design and approach can then develop organically.

This is not to say that other types of organisation cannot take on the role of a lead agency. Rather, local authority and Youth Offending Team (YOT)-led projects need to be aware of the ways in which Positive Futures requires an approach that is distinct from more conventional patterns of statutory sector public service delivery.

What is clear is that Positive Futures has created a strategic framework and support structures that have enabled even the newest of projects with little track record in the field to embrace the desired approach.

Strong, effective local partnerships

Organisationally, Positive Futures relies on building and maintaining successful relationships between a range of partner agencies, mirroring its wider delivery objectives. This reflects the wider advocacy of the benefits of partnership working in all areas of social policy, acknowledging that social problems cannot be understood in isolation from one another and that 'joined-up' policy responses are needed to overcome complex and intertwined forms of social disadvantage. In this sense, Positive Futures might be seen merely to reflect a wider policy trajectory. However, the emphasis on the need for individual projects to be 'supported by a strong partnership of appropriate agencies' in *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* should not be underestimated. Indeed, this has been reinforced through the national team's facilitation of regional network meetings which bring together the

Positive Futures projects in each region to share ideas and emphasise the benefits of partnership approaches.

Individual projects have responded well to this guidance, although across the programme as a whole some agencies are clearly more involved than others. What is significant is that the pattern of their involvement has remained relatively stable throughout the three-year strategy period and that nine different agencies figure in the

partnerships of 75 per cent of all Positive Futures projects. YOTs, the police, local authorities, Youth Services and Connexions are all involved with over 90 per cent of the projects. Furthermore, what changes there have been positively reflect the wider developments in the Positive Futures programme. There has been a significant growth in the involvement of both Community Safety Partnerships and Drug Action Teams (DATs), with the proportion of projects with an involvement from these partners rising from 69 per cent in

Table 6: Ideal organisational characteristics

Characteristic	Purpose	Barrier	Enabler
Independent and innovative	Currency and credibility with participants and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureaucratic governance, policy and procedure Fixed models of working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural independence Flexibility Confidence and passion for work
Organisationally transparent	To enable monitoring and encourage adaptability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-integrated delivery partnerships Negative perceptions of voluntary sector Focus on structure over delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-reflective practice Non-defensive and open communication
Co-operative and non-duplicating	To meet gaps in provision and support other similar agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying Positive Futures as sports/diversionary work 'Turf' wars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local audits/mapping exercises Desire to enhance provision
Providing value for money	To demonstrate Positive Futures achievements and secure future funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conventional 'value for money' models Inflexible budgets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established local networks Intensive, long-term work New forms of monitoring that focus on participant journeys
Capable of growth	To develop participant pathways To ensure expanded provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed delivery models Professional rivalry Thinly spread resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility Strategic approach Strong networks Consistency Thickly spread resources
Funding from a range of sources	Sustainability Strong foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed duration provision Reliant relationship with core sponsor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fit with strategic policy agendas Autonomy and flexibility

Table 7: Most common project partners

	Number of projects with each partner				
	Wave 2 Aug 03	Wave 3 Feb 04	Wave 4 Sep 04	Wave 5 Feb 05	Wave 6 Sep 05
Base	61	97	99	100	104
YOT	91	92	96	94	93
Police	89	86	89	87	93
Youth Services	89	93	93	89	91
Connexions	77	86	88	86	91
Local authority	78	90	90	82	88
Schools	80	78	86	85	85
Community Safety Partnership	69	74	79	78	82
DAT	69	72	86	89	82
Youth centre	68	69	72	74	75
Social Services	75	64	69	68	73
Pupil Referral Unit	68	70	68	66	72

Source: MORI

2003 to 82 per cent in the final round of the Key Elements Survey. This growing engagement reflects both the greater emphasis among projects on substance misuse issues as well as the roll out and expansion of projects in 'high crime' areas during the three-year strategy period.

It is, of course, important to draw a distinction between the 'paper partnerships' of convenience and those that extend and strengthen programmes of delivery. However, as the Key Elements survey identified, the involvement of many 'typical' partner agencies ranges from 'poorly involved' to 'very involved and key' at different project locations (see Table 8). This local diversity of project partners makes any distinction challenging.

In this context, the Case Study Research does not identify an 'ideal type' of project partnership. Instead it has drawn out a number of features associated with effective partnerships and the related barriers and enablers. These are presented in Table 9 overleaf.

These features are relevant across the range of project partnerships in relation to their roles in:

- commissioning and funding;
- making referrals;
- hosting activities;
- delivering activities;
- providing strategic support; and
- providing exit routes.

It is therefore encouraging that the most recent Key Elements Survey has revealed that a whole range of agencies is now becoming involved in the direction of local Positive Futures projects. This reflects the growing awareness of the programme and recognition of the contribution that it can make. It is equally encouraging to see that, as it develops, an increasingly wide range of agencies has become involved in providing young people with exit routes. This reinforces not only the strengthening of their engagement with projects, but also their embracement of Positive Futures' desire to build relationships, beyond the mere provision of activities, with those it engages.



In accordance with its strategic framework, Positive Futures has succeeded in creating strong local networks of partners in a variety of settings that contribute to programme effectiveness. In line with the developments reported in the last impact report, this success has been achieved through:

- a greater degree of involvement by partners, particularly at the strategic support and personal development levels;
- the continuing identification of benefits to participants and the project partners themselves; and
- growing confidence and awareness among project partners about the future direction of the Positive Futures programme.

Findings from the Survey of Partner Agencies show that through their involvement with Positive Futures a growing number of project partners now feel more able to help young people (90 per cent, an increase from 82 per cent in the previous two years). This finding can itself be related to partners' improved access to resources and young people

in need of help, awareness of young people's needs and access to facilities.

Central monitoring and evaluation framework

One of the things that has marked Positive Futures out from other sports-based social inclusion initiatives is its commitment to the development of a comprehensive programme of research, monitoring and evaluation. This is born out of the recognition of the failure of a succession of related programmes to demonstrate their achievements. Part of the reason for this is precisely that programmes have focused on trying to establish a direct causal relationship between involvement in sport and reductions in offending behaviour. Positive Futures recognises this as a flawed approach, the shortcomings of which are increasingly being recognised across academic, practitioner and policy-making circles.

As such, rather than focusing on sport itself as the prime variable or on crime statistics as the key outcome indicator, Positive Futures has been

Table 8: Core partners' degree of involvement

Partner	Poorly involved (%)	Casually involved (%)	Very involved (%)	Very involved/key (%)
Local authority	1	13	18	58
YOT	3	27	25	41
Youth Services	11	30	22	31
Youth centre	6	18	22	30
DAT	9	25	21	29
Community Safety Partnership	5	28	25	27
Connexions	10	24	38	21
Youth Inclusion Programme (YIP)	7	24	14	21
Police	6	38	30	21
Schools	1	23	43	20
Sports club	2	23	23	19
Drug services	2	22	23	14
Pupil Referral Unit	8	20	35	10
Social Services	16	33	17	9

Source: MORI

concerned with gaining a more complete picture. This relates to the ways in which projects (rather than sport) influence participants' attitudes, engagement, activities, education, employment, peer groups and relationships. Furthermore, while the programme is committed to generating evidence of its achievements, it is equally concerned with identifying ways of learning from the diverse range of agencies, staff and contexts in which its work is delivered.

Cul-de-sacs and gateways in 2003 emphasised the programme's role as an early intervention 'relationship strategy'. It recognised the need for new means of capturing the nature of the work and the journeys made by participants. While the Surveys of Partner Agencies conducted during that period represented the breadth and reach

of the programme, on their own they have not reflected the complex and evolutionary nature of the work with disadvantaged young people. Nor have they captured the stories of the participants who provide the focus for that work. Therefore, Positive Futures developed a new national monitoring and evaluation framework that is more inclusive and better reflects both the process of change associated with the programme and the views and aspirations of those most directly affected by it. This new framework is currently being piloted at nine projects across England and Wales. It embraces:

- a log book with session registers;
- a participant engagement matrix for assessing young people's progression;
- a participant monitoring 'toolkit';

Table 9: Effective partnership barriers and enablers

Feature	Ideal	Barrier	Enabler
Agendas	Shared	Vested interests	Complementary interests
Funding	Availability	Perception of security among partners/project	Proximity to funders, contact networks, the 'X' factor
Bureaucracy	Minimised	Excessive meetings and procedure	Informal personal contact and information exchange
Decision making	Simple	Excessive layers, distance from final decision makers	Proximity of decision makers
Balance of power	Supportive of lead	Dominance of antagonistic or sceptical partner	Authority vested with lead agency
Compulsion	Voluntary	Institutional 'paper' partnership	Enthusiasm for project
Organisational culture	Non-conflict	Conflicting approaches	Understanding of agency values
Skills	Expanded skills base	Duplication	Complementary non-duplicating skills
Personalities	Willing to learn	Domineering personalities	Mutual respect
Outcomes	Recognisable	Demand for fixed outcomes	Awareness of informal, gradual benefits

Table 10: Core partners' role in Positive Futures

Referrals	Delivering activities	Providing exit routes	Strategic support	Funding
YOT	Youth Services	Youth Services	YOT	Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP)
Connexions	YIP	Connexions	Youth Services	Youth Services
Youth Services	Sports clubs	YIP	Police	Connexions
Schools	Sports unit	Sports clubs	Sports unit	DAT
YIP	Connexions	Schools	Connexions	YOT
Police	YOT	Sports unit	DAT	
DAT	DAT		YIP	
			Community Safety Partnership	
			Schools	
			Local authority	

Source: MORI

- a project database;
- an electronic annual reporting format; and
- ongoing longitudinal case study research.

The annual reports produced by projects and the Annual Programme Report that will be taken from these will present aggregate programme performance and impact data. It will also present a detailed qualitative picture of the nature of the work being conducted. This can then be used to inform future programme developments. Further consolidation of the relationship between the new management agency and local projects will be provided by the team's project visits.

While primarily focusing on gaining first-hand experience of programme delivery, representatives from the national programme management team,

project steering group members and partners will review projects' practice against a set of guidance criteria. They will provide feedback and advice to all projects. Those identified as 'high risk' will receive further support visits by representatives of the national programme management team or the regional government office who will observe particular aspects of project practice identified as problematic.

In this way, it is hoped that the first systematic longitudinal picture of the impact of sports-based social intervention will be generated, while also enabling projects to demonstrate the depth of their work. This will also allow the national management team to monitor individual project and programme-wide developments.

Next season: the next steps for Positive Futures



Positive Futures is now moving towards the end of its latest phase of development, as defined in the *Cul-de-sacs and gateways* strategy document. While this strategy was concerned with creating the right environment in which to deliver the growing programme, the next stage of development needs to focus elsewhere.

Since *Cul-de-sacs and gateways*, the programme has focused on the development of a Workforce Quality Initiative, the identification of appropriate lead agencies, support for the establishment of strong effective local partnerships linked to regional strategies and development of a new central monitoring and evaluation framework. These were all concerned with putting the conditions in place for an effective programme. Now, rather than assessing the programme's impact, the programme needs to move on to a new phase of development focused on the fine tuning of its front-line delivery tools and effective assessment of participant progress. In many ways it was this recognition that informed the decision to outsource the programme from the Home Office from April 2006.

Rationale for outsourcing

A range of options for managing the Positive Futures programme from April 2006 were explored. During 2004 it was agreed that Positive Futures should be 'mainstreamed' and further aligned to the Tier 2 work of Drug Action Teams. At the same time it was felt it was important to keep a national profile, a recognisable 'brand name' and a central support framework.

Following a national consultation with key stakeholders, each of the different management options were assessed against the following criteria:

- impact on the Public Service Agreement target;
- helping agencies ensure quality of provision;
- ensuring sustainability;

- ensuring strategic fit;
- co-ordinating national sport based social interventions; and
- involving the private sector.

Ultimately it was decided that the best option would be to award the management of the Positive Futures contract to an existing national agency. It was felt that this would provide the best guarantee that individual lead agencies and their project partners would continue to be supported to accomplish the wider aims of Positive Futures while achieving the programme's new ambitions with the minimum of disruption. The right existing national agency would be able to bring with it an established infrastructure, support mechanisms, a track record and experience of successful project management and delivery, and corporate sector support.





Crime Concern

Following a competitive tender process during 2005 it was decided to award the management of Positive Futures to Crime Concern, the national crime reduction agency. Crime Concern will take over responsibility for managing the Positive Futures programme from April 2006, working closely with the Home Office. Crime Concern offers an exciting vision for the future of the programme and boasts vast experience, having already supported 800 local early intervention programmes, including six Positive Futures projects.

Their priorities for the next phase of development of Positive Futures will include:

- supporting existing projects to deliver quality services, with a specific emphasis on continuing investment in the development of staff and volunteers and progression opportunities for young people;
- communicating the positive impacts and key learning of the Positive Futures programme, including those evidenced in this report;
- working with projects and with key stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally

to make the most of what Positive Futures has to offer in achieving the key outcomes for young people at the heart of Every Child Matters (ECM) and the updated National Drug Strategy; and

- expanding the programme further, with backing from the commercial sector and other partners.

Emerging policy on children and young people

Recent developments in legislation and policy have opened up a number of new opportunities for Positive Futures to engage with and support an ever widening array of policy agendas, strategies and outcome targets. Of these developments, undoubtedly the most significant is the drive to create integrated children's services. Based around the five ECM core principles, this drive is being delivered via children's trusts and involves integration at all levels. At its heart are expectations of:

- a focus on good outcomes for children, young people and their families;
- multidisciplinary working;
- early identification of those at risk or in need;
- information sharing;
- integrated planning and commissioning; and
- effective relationships and clear accountabilities.

Although approaches often differ, most areas are expected to have well developed children's trusts by 2006, with all areas expected to have achieved this position by 2008. Both strategically and operationally the development of integrated children's services presents opportunities for Positive Futures projects that are perhaps uniquely placed to support achievement across all five ECM identified outcomes:

- being healthy;
- staying safe;
- enjoying and achieving;
- making a positive contribution; and
- achieving economic well being.

Monitoring and evaluation

In recognition of these opportunities and the need for Positive Futures to align itself with the expectations around ECM, a new and exciting monitoring and evaluation framework has been developed for the programme. Many other sports-based social policy initiatives have failed to evidence their achievements accurately because they have focused on unrealistic assessment criteria. The new framework is therefore centred on participant progression pathways and the ECM outcomes framework.

The new participatory monitoring and evaluation systems are currently being piloted at nine projects, and will be rolled out nationally across the programme during summer 2006. It is hoped that the framework, which is supported by new electronic reporting mechanisms, will help projects to reflect and communicate their work more effectively while also providing the first systematic, verifiable national assessment of participant progression.

The final whistle

Six years into the development of Positive Futures and at the culmination of the first three-year strategy period, the programme has been established as perhaps the leading sports-based social inclusion initiative in England and Wales. Positive Futures has forged a new pathway for initiatives of this type on the basis of a robust strategic approach that provides appropriate direction and support while enabling local projects to develop their own locally attuned approaches to engagement. As the programme moves into its next phase of development, to be managed by Crime Concern, there remains much to do. The burden of the challenges will, however, be lightened by the extent to which Positive Futures has helped to re-enliven people's interest in and commitment to the use of sport as a key social policy vehicle.





Positive Futures – Snapshot of Young Britain project

The Snapshot of Young Britain project was designed to illustrate the lives of young people involved in Positive Futures projects.

Young people were asked to present an image of their everyday life, in this case on a normal Wednesday evening in February 2006. This synchronised photoshoot, taken at 7pm acts as a 'snapshot' and represents what many young

people in 2006 are actually seeing and doing as they go about their everyday lives. The winning photograph above was taken by 15-year old Ashley Cawdron from the Positive Futures project in Suffolk and features 13-year old Carly Ogogo.

To view all the images, please visit www.snapshotofyoungbritain.co.uk

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From 1 April 2006, the national management of the Positive Futures programme will be undertaken by Crime Concern. For further information from 1 April 2006, please contact:

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