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# AthleteInspireProgramme

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION REPORT

Final Draft

December 2020

A report by:



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## GLOSSARY

<b>AAL:</b>	<b>Athlete Appearance Liaison.</b> The role designated to liaise with athletes regarding their appearances. They largely act as mentors or personal development support for the athlete when engaged with the deployment host.
<b>AI:</b>	<b>Athletes Inspire.</b> The recipient of the National Lottery award, responsible for delivering the Athlete Inspire Programme.
<b>AIP:</b>	<b>Athlete Inspire Programme.</b> The 4-year National Lottery funded programme focussed on supporting Olympic and Paralympic athletes to deliver impactful volunteering appearances.
<b>AIP Athlete:</b>	A Lottery funded Olympic or Paralympic funded athlete who had voluntarily agreed to be part of AIP.
<b>APA:</b>	<b>Athlete Performance Awards.</b> APAs serve to contribute to the athlete's ordinary living costs and their personal sporting costs. APAs are allocated where there is the greatest 'financial need' and are subject to a means testing exercise. The level of APA received is determined by a number of criteria, not least of which is the level of performance an athlete has achieved and is capable of producing in the future.
<b>APM:</b>	<b>Athlete Peer Mentor.</b> The name for the athlete mentor role that was part of the AIP intervention in delivery year 1. In subsequent years the role was known as the 'Athlete Appearance Liaison' (AAL).
<b>Athlete cohort:</b>	Refers to the year that AIP athletes commenced their involvement in AIP. There were three athlete cohorts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohort 1 – commencing between July 2017 and June 2018</li> <li>• Cohort 2 – commencing between July 2018 and March 2019</li> <li>• Cohort 3 – commencing from April 2019</li> </ul>
<b>AVA:</b>	<b>Athlete Volunteer Appearances.</b> Since 2012, athletes receiving Lottery funding via UK Sport have been required to commit to volunteering up to five days a year. These are known as Athlete Volunteer Appearances.
<b>DH:</b>	<b>Deployment Host.</b> Organisations that were identified to host AIP appearances.
<b>DY (1, 2, 3):</b>	<b>Delivery Year.</b> Refers to the years over which AIP was delivered, accounting for an initial 6-month lead in time for the project as outlined below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Delivery Year (DY) 1:</b> Ran from July 2017 for 12 months</li> <li>• <b>Delivery Year (DY) 2:</b> Ran from July 2018 to June 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Delivery Year (DY) 3:</b> Ran from April 2019 through to December 2020.</li> </ul>

	There was an overlap between the end of DY2 and the start of DY3 based on the desire to try and align AIP Delivery Years to AVA years (based on April to March reporting cycles).
<b>DP:</b>	<b>Deployment Partner.</b> Refers to organisations who partnered with AI during DY1 and DY2 to help provide a national conduit to local deployment opportunities through their respective networks.
<b>EIS:</b>	<b>English Institute for Sport.</b> The EIS provides support services to British Olympic and Paralympic sports, enabling sports and athletes to realise potential and to achieve excellence. This includes employing a network of Performance Lifestyle Advisors (PLAs) many of whom were centrally involved in support AIP as part of their roles with sports.
<b>M&amp;E:</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation.</b> The team led by Switch the Play Foundation in partnership with the University of Bath and University of Gloucestershire, providing an evaluation of the impacts of AIP.
<b>NGB:</b>	<b>National Governing Body of Sport.</b>
<b>PD:</b>	<b>Performance Director.</b> The role responsible for leading the performance programmes for NGBs.
<b>PLA:</b>	<b>Performance Lifestyle Advisor.</b> Employed by the EIS and based within each NGB, PLAs are trained and accredited practitioners who provide holistic support to athletes, supporting their personal and lifestyle needs whilst promoting and encouraging activity and development that allows them to continue to grow as people as well as sporting performers.
<b>RF:</b>	<b>Regional Facilitator.</b> The role within the AIP delivery team who works with athletes to match their skills and future goals with appropriate deployment hosts.

## DATA SHARING STATEMENT

This report and the case studies appended to this report are the property of UK Sport and Sport England [the 'clients']. Due to the reporting mechanism and the nature of case study work, anonymity was not assured to the participants. All participants cited in this report consented to being identifiable in the report and the case studies and that this information could be shared in the public domain.

In line with the consent given by participants, any future outputs using the data contained in the report and case studies must be anonymised using pseudonyms, ensuring that no individual or organisation is identifiable to any person beyond the M&E team. The supporting data is not available to be shared publicly. After delivery of the report and case studies to the clients, all data will be securely stored in the University of Bath Research Data Archive and destroyed in accordance with the University of Bath's Data Management Policy.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

### I.1 Introducing the Athlete Inspire Programme

The Athlete Inspire Programme (AIP) complements the Athlete Volunteer Appearances (AVA) programme<sup>1</sup> as part of UK Sport's mission to inspire a nation through Olympic and Paralympic sport and ran over the four-year cycle to Tokyo 2020.

*The overall purpose of the Athlete Inspire Programme (AIP) is to maximise the quality and quantity of athlete volunteer appearances by Olympic and Paralympic Athletes and for these appearances to have a demonstrable positive impact on the five Government outcomes for sport<sup>2</sup>. The focus for this will be the beneficiaries of the volunteer appearances but this will also include an understanding of the impacts on the individual athletes themselves. This will help to introduce and position best practice for the benefit of the wider AVA athlete community. (Athlete Inspire Programme, Solicited Lottery Application, December 2016)*

AIP has involved the following core elements of support:

- A programme of training support for athletes to help them prepare to deliver impactful appearances.
- Access to athlete mentors to provide more personalised support for athletes in developing their skills and confidence, supporting their preparation for and learning from appearances.
- Support for athletes in terms of identifying and being matched to relevant deployment opportunities for conducting their appearances.

AIP has been structured around 3 delivery years. Delivery year 1 (DY1) ran from July 2017 after an initial 6-month development period and involved 110 cohort 1 athletes across 16 sports. 75 athletes were initially retained into delivery year 2 (DY2) with an additional 7 cohort 2 athletes joining the programme from July 2018. By the end of DY2 in July 2019 a total of 129 athletes had been engaged on AIP at some point over DY1 and DY2.

After DY2 a reset of the AIP model was undertaken reflecting on the lessons learnt to date. Delivery year 3 (DY3) commenced in April 2019 with a deliberate focus on a small number of athletes and sports centred around three regional hubs – Manchester, Sheffield and Bisham Abbey. A total of 43 athletes from across 9 sports have been engaged as part of DY3.<sup>3</sup> With the postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games and Paralympic Games a decision was taken to extend the DY3 approach through to the end of the funding agreement in December 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> As described by UK Sport the AVA programme involves:

*'As a member of the World Class Programme it is important that you give back to your local community. All athletes on the World Class Programme are therefore expected to volunteer up to five days of their time to inspire the next generation. Your volunteering appearances do not need to take all day and can be fitted around your training schedule. There are two main things to remember when considering what would count as an Athlete Volunteering Appearance, they must: Focus on inspiring the next generation; Be unpaid appearances (expenses can be covered).'* (UK Sport, Athlete Appearances Brochure, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> The five government outcomes for Sport – physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. Sporting Future: A new strategy for an active nation (2015)

<sup>3</sup> This excludes British Shooting who joined the programme in late June 2020 and had three athletes doing some preliminary support work on AIP.

AIP has been delivered by Athletes Inspire (AI) on behalf of UK Sport and Sport England, having been successful in a competitive procurement process late in 2016. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team led by the Switch the Play Foundation, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Bath and University of Gloucestershire were appointed as part of the overall contract to provide structured monitoring and evaluation, across the four years. The purpose of the original brief for the M&E Team was to:

- a. Assess how effective the programme is at solving the identified challenges relating to Athlete Volunteering Appearances. The original expression of interest document identified that:
  - Many athletes are not experienced in completing volunteering appearances and lack confidence,
  - Athletes have very busy and demanding schedules and can find it difficult to find appropriate opportunities and accommodate these efficiently in their life.
- b. Understand how the athlete volunteer appearances contribute to the five outcomes for sport set out in the Government strategy for sport (Sporting Futures 2015).

## 1.2 Purpose of the report

This is the final monitoring and evaluation report covering the entire AIP programme from 2017 through to 2020.

In agreement with UK Sport and Sport England the focus for this final report addresses three key areas:

1. **Delivery model and process** - providing an overview and analysis of how this has changed over the lifespan of the project and an honest appraisal of which elements have been successful and which have not in terms of helping to meet AIP outcomes. This includes identifying some critical success factors/key ingredients for supporting more impactful athlete volunteering. The agreed focus for analysis is the DY3 approach as this was informed by the learnings from DY1 and DY2 and was identified as having most relevance in terms of informing the future strategy for volunteering appearances. (see Section 3).
2. **Impact** – providing an overview of both quantitative and qualitative evidence relating to the impact on beneficiaries and the contribution to the Government Outcomes for Sport. This report goes further than just identifying the impacts on beneficiaries of appearances but also considers the impacts on the host organisations of volunteering appearances and also for the athletes themselves. (see Section 4).
3. **Identifying future considerations for the effective delivery of Athlete Volunteering Appearances** – using the evidence to outline considerations on the types of roles and interventions that are critical in the process of delivering impactful volunteering appearances. (These are highlighted throughout Section 3 and summarised in Section 5).

## 1.3 Research Approach

Underpinning the research approach was a detailed and full consideration of the ethical implications of the research activity, covering data collection, analysis, storage and dissemination of findings. At all times, the M&E team actively respected the human rights and dignities of all those involved in the project and questions of consent, confidentiality and privacy were all meticulously managed during the

research process. The research data was managed in accordance with the University of Bath's and University of Gloucestershire's research codes (compliance, security, management and storage). Prior to the commencement of the M&E process, full ethical approval was sought and gained through the Research Ethics Approval Committee for Health (REACH) [University of Bath]. Following the initial approval, ethical issues were continually monitored at intervals during the project and, where identified, appropriately managed. The integrity of the data collected and presented in the report is of vital importance in relation to the veracity and verisimilitude of the findings.

A bespoke design, placing the athlete at the centre of the process, has been a central focus of the research approach across all delivery years. Core to this was the desire to understand the factors that underpin athlete engagement in AIP - why, how and what influences their engagement with training, mentoring, deployment and their ability to have an impact in line with Government key outcomes. This provides insight regarding the impact that athletes can have and identifies the influence that variables like their motivations and engagement in AIP have on the ultimate impacts of their appearances. In addition, other key stakeholder voices, such as the deployment hosts and the beneficiaries, have also been audited to illuminate the impacts of AIP.

To be athlete centred meant asking the athletes what they think and want. Our approach across the lifespan of the programme has offered a number of ways in which this happened, beginning with an initial needs analysis and tracking surveys conducted through DY1 and DY2, and focussing in DY3 around a qualitative case study approach.

The theoretical approach to evaluating impact on beneficiaries was centred on the theme of inspiration. The challenge was to design a research intervention that was sensitive enough to measure impact of an individual appearance whilst able to be aggregated across multiple appearances that were aiming to achieve very different outcomes. However, the common denominator across all appearances was that of 'inspiration' - the athlete's role in an appearance was to go into a setting (in person or virtual) and to inspire some kind of positive change within a group of beneficiaries. The research approach aimed to track both inspiration towards a targeted outcome as identified by the individual deployment host, as well as inspiration towards achieving a personal outcome of the individual beneficiary's identification.

The approach has been underpinned by the following core principles:

- **Developmental** – providing ongoing feedback to inform the development of AIP.
- **Mixed methods** – quantitative and qualitative, recognising the balance between needing some data at scale and the need to get under the skin of this to understand the 'why' and 'so what' questions.
- **Impactful** – aiming to go deeper than simply 'does it work?' The research has sought to understand what works for whom, and how, and when, in what contexts, with what support and why? Underpinning this was an understanding that the value for public investment needs to go beyond understanding how effectively the athlete development element (the inputs) are delivered but also in terms of us being able to help demonstrate the wider contribution that athletes can have (the impacts) in relation to the key Government outcomes for sport.
- **Contextual** – consideration of the varying contexts between different NGBs and different roles which could influence athlete engagement whilst recognising that the nature of impacts could vary considerably depending on the context of the appearance and the variety of beneficiary groups that could be engaged.



- **Ethical** – ensuring the dignity and respect of all participants as an ongoing concern throughout the project.

With the reset following DY2, the research strategy had to adapt to the amended delivery model across the three regions (Sheffield, Manchester and Bisham). The approach for DY3 was centred around the development of multiple individual case studies (see Appendix 6.1) to look in depth at individual athlete appearance journeys with their identified deployment partner/s. This has been the primary mechanism for capturing and understanding beneficiary impacts of appearances. The case studies are derived from in-depth qualitative data captured from semi-structured interviews [audio recorded and transcribed verbatim] with all relevant stakeholders surrounding the athlete journey (e.g., the athlete, PLA, AAL, RF, deployment host). Following transcription, interview data were subject to thematic analysis in order to sort the data into relevant themes ready for representing the data in the case studies and report. Participant interview data were represented by drawing upon the raw data and using illustrative quotes attributed to the participant. This method of analysis and representation ensured the credibility and accuracy of the data reported.

In addition to the case study data from completed athlete journeys (ending in an appearance), further in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders in circumstances where problems arose in the athlete journey. This ensured that the recommendations made in this report are fully informed from both complete and incomplete athlete journeys. In order for full confidence in understanding AIP, additional in-depth data from the AIP delivery team was also captured using in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The evidence for this final report draws upon the following monitoring and evaluation outputs produced across the programme:

- An end of year monitoring and evaluation report provided for delivery years 1 and 2 in July 2018 and August 2019 respectively
- An interim DY3 report produced in May 2020
- Eight completed case studies which have been developed following individual athletes through their experiences with a matched deployment partner (see Appendix 6.1).

## 2. EVOLUTION OF THE DELIVERY MODEL

### 2.1 Overview of AIP by numbers

Table 2.1 provides a high-level summary of the scope of delivery by AIP across the three delivery years of the programme. This does not include any impact data which is reported on in section 4.

Table 2.1 AIP - Overview by Numbers

Variable	DY1	DY2	DY3
<b>Athletes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>110 athletes recruited in DY1</li> <li>75 athletes (68%) retained into DY2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>77 athletes on AIP at the end of DY2 - 61 cohort 1 athletes and 16 cohort 2 athletes.</li> <li>32 athletes opted out during DY2.</li> <li>129 athletes engaged on AIP at some point over DY1 and DY2.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>43 athletes <sup>4</sup></li> <li>24 athletes previously engaged in AIP (cohort 1 or 2)</li> <li>19 new athletes in DY3 (cohort 3)</li> </ul>
<b>Sports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 sports <sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17 sports with 1 new sport added (Hockey)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 sports <sup>6</sup></li> <li>7 of these were already engaged in AIP; 2 new sports recruited.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>67% of targeted training sessions for DY1 completed.</li> <li>Average of 1.5 attendances per athlete.</li> </ul>	<p>Sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number of sessions delivered during DY2 = 15, equivalent of 29% of targeted capacity</li> <li>Cumulative number of sessions delivered DY1 and DY2 = 39.</li> </ul> <p>Training attendances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total DY2 attendance = 53, equivalent of 23% of capacity</li> <li>DY1 and DY2 training attendance = 168 (excluding 1 to 1s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training and Mentoring combined in a more flexible and personalised approach for the athlete. <sup>8</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Includes 6 para-cyclists. Para Cycling formally opted out of DY3 but agreed that athletes could continue to engage in the programme to complete any appearances from deployment relationships made through AIP. The data does not include three Shooters who were recruited to the programme in August 2020.

<sup>5</sup> The original DY1 sports were identified to provide a mix of Olympic and Paralympic, Summer and Winter sports, larger and smaller programmes, and position on the AVA league table. These sports were Athletics; Boxing; Disability Shooting; Disability Table Tennis; Diving; Judo (includes VI Judo); Para-Athletics; Para-Rowing; Skeleton; Ski and Snowboard; Taekwondo; Trampoline; Wheelchair Basketball; Para-Cycling; Para-Triathlon.

<sup>6</sup> Does not include British Shooting who only agreed to join the programme in late June 2020. Hockey were originally approached to be part of DY3 but declined the opportunity.

<sup>7</sup> The seven existing sports were – Disability Shooting, Para Rowing, Boxing, Disability Table Tennis, Wheelchair Basketball, Para Cycling, Taekwondo. The two new sports were Cycling and Para Badminton.

<sup>8</sup> Due to its more informal and personalised nature it is very difficult to track the exact volume of support accessed by the athletes. A small number of athletes (6) engaged in DY3 very minimally. The remaining 35 athletes engaged in the support services offered by the Regional Facilitator and Athlete Appearance Liaison to some degree.

Variable	DY1	DY2	DY3
<b>Mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited take up on mentoring – Athlete Peer Mentors reported providing support for 29 athletes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported levels of confidence were higher (4.63/5) for athletes referencing training/support received for an appearance in comparison to the average confidence across all AIP athletes (4.44/5).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See above.</li> </ul>
<b>Deployment support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 of 243 appearances by AIP athletes were undertaken via managed deployment routes (to the end of March 2018)</li> <li>12 managed deployments to end of delivery year 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>58 individual appearances specifically supported through AIP deployment routes.<sup>9</sup> Of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>36 were direct deployment through deployment partners (involving 26 athletes)</li> <li>18 were via Local deployment opportunities as part of the Manchester pilot (involving 10 athletes)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of athletes completing their interests and passions discussion = 37(86%)</li> <li>Number of athletes with a confirmed deployment partner match = 23 (53%)</li> <li>Number of Athletes undertaking AIP appearances (in DY3) = 25 (58%)</li> <li>Athletes yet to complete an AIP appearance in DY3 = 18 (42%)</li> <li>Athletes completing more than one AIP appearance = 21 (49%)</li> <li>Number of AIP Appearances (in DY3) = 100</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Learnings from Delivery Years 1 and 2

The intention of the original AIP delivery model was to be able to deliver a programme of support at scale with many of the original KPIs being focussed on quantity. The original KPIs for sports and athletes on the programme was to aim for at least 12 sports and 100 athletes. This was comfortably exceeded. This guided the approach to training, i.e., a model of group-based training, and also deployment, where a national network of deployment partners was identified.

The DY2 M&E report summarised the position as of August 2018:

- Where data was able to be captured on appearances it was clear they were being well received by deployment hosts and beneficiaries. This includes:
  - High levels of athlete enjoyment of appearances (4.55/5)
  - 100% of deployment hosts (n=19) felt the athlete contributed positively to the targeted Government outcomes, were ‘very satisfied’ with the appearance, and would host an athlete again.
  - Data from beneficiaries was showing strong levels of being inspired towards an identified outcome (5.71/7).
- However, whilst there had been a discernible growth in the number of AIP managed appearances into DY2, the volume remained well below the initial forecasts for the project.

<sup>9</sup> Does not include all appearances that AIP athletes will have conducted independently through the year.

This in turn presented a challenge in terms of being able to track and capture impact data to understand the difference that appearances were having.

- There also remained a challenge in trying to connect the emerging evidence relating to impact of appearances to the role of AIP in contributing to those impacts.

These themes have been built upon with stakeholders' reflections looking back at DYI and 2. One of the biggest identified challenges was with the **level of prescription in the deployment model**. On the one hand there was neither the scale of opportunities provided for the number of athletes that needed servicing with opportunities, whilst on the other hand, athlete take up of the available deployment opportunities was often slow and sporadic:

*'I think that we moved from a prescribed model in DYI one in the design of it, which was prescriptive in terms of it was about the process, and a lack flexibility we had in a deployment host. So, we were trying to create set moments in time for an athlete to be able to fit into a visit. And it became clear that that wasn't working largely due to non-availability, and particularly performance related issues. And a lack of clarity, I think compounded by a lack of commitment or understanding on the part of both the governing bodies, and in many cases, athletes, about the sort of importance of valuing this area of work, it was new to them.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

Allied to this there was a perceived emphasis from UK Sport and Sport England at the outset for the desire for athletes to be undertaking more challenging appearances specifically with harder to reach groups. In this way the original process was designed more to try and fit athletes to projects:

*'When it set out in DYI the aspiration of the guy who was really sponsoring at that stage... was really that it could be used as a vehicle towards hard-to-reach groups, disenfranchised groups, and that only served to make it if you like, more difficult. We tried to choose deployment hosts to reflect that.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

This perceived restrictive narrative was considered to have impacted upon levels of athlete engagement:

*'Where I found was quite hard is that they [UK Sport] were very restrictive about what the athlete volunteering appearance could look like. And I think that's what put a lot of athletes off, and that's what made it in some ways, hard work for AIP. Whereas if they would have gone in and said, listen, you know, we're athlete focussed, it's about what the athletes want. And also, it may be what the NGB's charity or anything would like, I think the AIP process could have been and looked and felt very different.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

The complex nature of accountability within AIP was an additional hurdle to overcome, with AI reflecting that there were a number of chains between funder and athlete, and it was ultimately the athlete that they needed the engagement of:

*'There's complexity about it. Because if you look and say, who's our clients, you've got a programme, that's supposed to be a pilot, developmental in nature, funded by Sport England, for the benefit of UK Sport for the benefit of the sports, really trying to get to the athletes. So, who's your client?... So, what we set out, and therefore what we were trying to achieve, and it didn't need to be going wrong, in many places.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

### *The Manchester Local Deployment Pilot*

Within, DY2, in the spirit of exploring an optimum approach, AI put in place a local deployment pilot in Manchester which tested some new principles for deployment. This included a different role to support the AIP intervention - a regional broker / facilitator with the purpose of matching athlete's stated interests to targeted deployment opportunities in that locality.

The pilot was agreed in March 2018 with Steve Flynn (the lead for the pilot) and was introduced to Para Cycling and Taekwondo in the May. The reported aim was to take a more localised and athlete centred view to deployment centred on their particular interests and passions:

*'Very simply I guess, I think the approach I advocated to Martin at the time was around trying to flip the model on its head. So rather than come to an athlete or a sport with a prescribed or a shopping list of opportunities, with almost pre-determined hosting partners, that we actually seek the athlete's engagement more directly and try to establish what their interests are. And that was the nature of the pilot.'* (Steve Flynn, RF, Manchester Pilot, October 2020)

An M&E led review of the pilot in January 2019 identified that the approach was responsible for the first AIP Case Study developed, of Para Cyclist Megan Giglia. This was able to capture the whole journey from identifying athlete interests and passions, to finding a deployment match, and ultimately tracking the impact of the ensuing appearances.

Key learnings from the pilot included:

- **Identifying Athlete interests** – the ability to do this effectively was key, with trust and developing rapport a central feature. It was apparent that the broker (Steve Flynn) had done this with some of his athletes. The ability to get access to the athletes here had been a challenge.
- **Matching** - having knowledge of athletes and local knowledge of where to deploy was shown to be effective (albeit from a small sample set here however). This feature of the pilot was different to other aspects of deployment on AIP at the time.
- **Clarity between the role of the deployment broker and AAL** is important with potential for overlap.
- **Awareness of M&E** – a benefit of the model is that this could provide warm introductions to Deployment Hosts which helped to expedite the process of data capture and provides some scope to cater for short turnaround times between confirmation and deployment (which was a common challenge through the project at that point).
- **Sport Engagement** – it is evident that some sports were more engaged in AIP than others. The support of the sport and the Performance Lifestyle Advisor were key to any proposed reset approach.

The deployment pilot was considered central to informing the DY3 approach:

*'The main change leading into DY3 was the introduction of regional facilitators. So, the guys on the ground who can provide the more local brokerage, we piloted that in the second half of DY2, and then built into the design in DY3.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

## 2.3 The Delivery Year 3 Approach

Following a review process at the end of DY2 it was agreed via the AIP Project Board that there needed to be a reset of the programme for DY3. This was based on both the positive outcomes achieved by AIP over the first two years, but also on a number of the ongoing barriers that were limiting its ability to deliver against the identified objectives.

Appendix 6.2 provides a more detailed summary of the learning from DY1 and DY2 (from the DY1 and DY2 Monitoring and Evaluation Reports) and outlines how this helped to inform the intended DY3 approach. Section 3 examines what happened in practice and how the learnings from this could help to inform future AVA approaches.

The main changes for DY3 were:

- A focus more on **quality and not quantity** – working with less athletes and sports, and specifically recognising this would mean fewer overall appearances.
- Focussing on **three regions**, with the NGBs currently on AIP within those regions who were perceived by AI to have shown a reasonable level of engagement in AIP to date, initially invited to continue with the programme i.e.
  - Manchester - Para Cycling and Taekwondo
  - Sheffield - Wheelchair Basketball, Boxing and Disability Table Tennis
  - Bisham Abbey - Hockey, Para Rowing and Disability Shooting.<sup>10</sup>
- The addition of the **Regional Facilitator (RF) role** in each region, based on the model piloted in Manchester in DY2.
- A **re-focus of what ‘athlete centred’ appearances meant**, re-presenting how appearance opportunities were set up by starting with the athlete’s interests and passions.
- A **more flexible approach to support** with the AAL and RF roles providing bespoke support to individual athletes, moving away from more group-based training delivery.

### Summary of the key roles

With the change of delivery model, roles and responsibilities of AIP personnel have altered slightly. Table 2.2 below outlines key roles and following this is a brief description of each.

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<sup>10</sup> This list identifies the original intent. Any changes in the final mix of sports involved in DY3 are picked up through section 3 of the report.

Table 2.2 List of Roles and Responsibilities

Job Role <sup>11</sup>	Brief Description	Overview of Change from DY2
<b>Director/Lead of Project</b>	Martin Corck acts as the lead on strategic and development oversight. This role is principally charged with liaising with the client and strategic partners in developing the direction of the AI project.	Largely unchanged, although with slightly increased operational oversight based on a reduction from two to one team leader roles in DY3
<b>AIP Team Leader</b>	Alison Williams has oversight for the day to day running of the AI project, particularly focussed on liaison with RF and AAL roles and the sport contacts (NGB, PALS) as well as liaising with M&E team.	In DY2 there were two roles undertaking this function of managing sport relationships. Staff turnover meant Ali's role increased to pick up all sport relationships as well as managing both RF and AAL roles. The AAL management was a new responsibility.
<b>Regional Facilitator</b>	Steve Flynn (Manchester and Sheffield) and James Cavalier (Bisham Abbey) act as Regional Facilitators. Principally the roles involve working with athletes to match their skills and future goals with appropriate deployment hosts.	Steve was engaged in undertaking the Local Deployment Pilot in Manchester in DY2 which helped inform the DY3 approach. His role extended to Sheffield in DY3. James is new to AIP in DY3.
<b>Athlete Appearance Liaison</b>	Andy Barrow (Sheffield), Rachael MacKenzie (Manchester) and Gorgs Geikie (Bisham Abbey) are designated to liaise with athletes regarding their appearances. They largely act as mentors or personal development support for the athlete when engaged with the deployment host.	The DY3 reset saw a reduction from six to three AAL roles. Andy Barrow and Gorgs Geikie have been involved in the mentoring role on AIP since DY1. Rachael has been involved since DY2. There is continuity of relationship between AAL and sport in 4 DY3 sports, the rest are new relationships in DY3.
<b>Deployment Host</b>	A host (school, charity, business, sports club) that hosts the athlete appearance or activity. This is brokered by the regional facilitator.	Unchanged.
<b>Athlete</b>	Athletes that are on funding and have opted (as NGB opt in or as individuals) to take part in the AI project – focussing on more personalised support for athlete appearances	There is a mix between athletes who have been engaged in AIP from earlier delivery years (24), and some who are new to the programme in DY3 (17).
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	Those individuals receiving the inspirational appearance. i.e. school children, junior athletes, charity beneficiaries, staff in businesses.	Unchanged.

### Athlete Journey

The Athlete Journey was developed by Athletes Inspire (AI) as a means of mapping the process for AIP appearances, from initial recruitment of sports through to a completed set of appearances by an

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the roles outlined, AI also contracted Chris Brindley to act in an advisory role for the project team. In DY 1-2 the role was focussed on a support programme for the mentors. In DY3 the role, was more in an advisory capacity to the AI team. Chris was credited by AI as being an invaluable source of strategic support.

individual athlete. This process was set out collaboratively involving AI, UK Sport, the EIS, and Sport England through the initial reset meetings in December 2018 and January 2019. The version that is shown in Appendix 6.3 is the original version that was shared in the first DY3 sport introduction meetings in April 2019. This version was subsequently simplified for NGBs to highlight the specific stages of the process in which they would be engaged.

## 2.4 DY3 Engagement Metrics

Table 2.3 provides a summary of AIP athletes engagement across DY3 highlighting progress across the key stages of the Athlete Journey, and ultimately to the successful fulfilment of appearances. What is clearly evident from this table, is that whilst this report will highlight a number of positive case studies, the AIP approach cannot be claimed to have worked for all athletes. This report attempts to understand the reasons for non-engagement as well as highlighting where there have been real successes.

*Table 2.3 – DY3 Engagement Overview*

Total Number of Athletes engaged during DY3	43 <sup>12</sup>
Number of athletes exiting AIP <sup>13</sup>	16
Number of Sports	9 <sup>14</sup>
Number completing interests and passions discussion	37 (86%)
Provisional match to Deployment Partner	9 (21%)
Confirmed match to Deployment Partner	23 (53%)
Athletes undertaking AIP appearances (in DY3) <sup>15</sup>	25 (58%)
Athletes yet to complete an AIP appearance in DY3	18 (42%)
Athletes completing more than one AIP appearance in DY3	21 (49%)
Number of AIP Appearances (in DY3)	100

Furthermore, Appendix 6.4 presents a summary of the overall appearance reporting by the DY3 AIP athletes as logged via the UK Sport portal. It highlights a number of important points:

- It is evident that achieving the appearance numbers is not the primary issue, even though many athletes reported that this wasn't straightforward. In the vast majority of cases at least three appearances were logged in the year preceding the athlete joining AIP.
- Only one athlete had not undertaken or logged any AIP or general AVA appearances during DY3 (April 2019 through to September 2020 for the data cut off point).

<sup>12</sup> There are some names who were on the RF logs that do not appear within table 2.4. This relates to athletes who have engaged in part of the DY3 intervention but were not formally part of AIP.

<sup>13</sup> Refers to any athlete who has chosen to opt out of AIP before the end of the delivery year. This could be because the athlete has completed their appearance set.

<sup>14</sup> Does not include British Shooting who joined AIP in the final months of the programme with three athletes receiving support.

<sup>15</sup> Data taken from a combination of the RF regional logs and the UK Sport portal which has logged appearances by athletes. In some instances known AIP appearances haven't been logged with AIP and vice versa.



- In all other instances, where athletes had failed to undertake an AIP appearance in DY3 they were still able to undertake and log AVA appearances. This is important because it would be reasonable to imply that there might have been elements of the AIP programme that weren't working for those athletes.
- Just two athletes had only undertaken AIP appearances during the DY3 period (defined above), as opposed to also logging AVA appearances. One these is boxer Niall Farrell, for whom a case study has been developed to understand his appearance history (see references across sections 3 and 4 and a short summary in Appendix 6.1).
- Four athletes who had been on AIP from either DY1 or DY2 had did not undertake any AIP appearances across the multiple years they were involved in the programme. This includes two Wheelchair Basketballers, a sport for whom, as illustrated in sections 3 and 4, which was seen as an exemplar of engagement within AIP.

The learning presented in section 3 will highlight that the bigger constraint appears to be more about the value that athletes get from doing appearances, and how they could move from a mindset of 'tick-boxing' to seeing the personal value they could get, not least in feeling they could make meaningful contributions to beneficiary impact. Where AIP matching between athlete and deployment host had gone well this comes to life in the feedback from athletes.

### 3. PROCESS LEARNINGS

Section 3 focusses on the process learnings specifically related to the DY3 model as this has been specifically informed by the preceding two years of delivery and has been identified by UK Sport as a model, they were keen to pilot with a view to how it could inform future delivery of AVAs across the UK high performance sport system.

#### 3.1 Principles of the delivery model evolution

##### *Summary of key learning points*

1. The DY3 approach aligns to the original outcomes and core purpose AIP. It is focussed on revisiting the process for implementing the agreed principles as opposed to a fundamental shift in direction.
2. Re-focussing on what an 'athlete centred' approach to appearances means has been critical. This has led to a model which changes the narrative for how appearances are presented to athletes, starting with asking athletes about their interests and passions and being more explicit that appearances can also be of benefit to them.
3. The introduction of the Regional Facilitator role was the main change in DY3, along with the adoption of a different, more personalised approach to training and support.
4. Flexibility in approach from both a client and delivery perspective has been critical in being able to reset in this way, part way through a four-year programme.

The DY3 reset model is based on the following principles:

- AIP will focus on the quality, not quantity, of appearances.
- AIP will work with NGBs and athletes that are committed and engaged in receiving support as per the original brief.
- AIP will promote a facilitated process which starts with identifying an athlete's interests/passions around their volunteer appearances and local opportunities are then sourced which align to these interests/passions.
- AIP is to be reset using a regional support model (facilitated by a Regional Facilitator) to achieve impactful repeat appearances.<sup>16</sup>

These were reinforced through discussion with stakeholders, for instance with the shift of emphasis away from a numbers-based approach which was identified by both AI and the EIS as being really important:

*'And in the reset, one of the principles was from UK Sport, they were not so much worried about numbers of athletes. They wanted whatever the number was, but for athletes and sports who wanted to engage, that was a key principle.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

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<sup>16</sup> AIP Reset Model (15/03/19)

*'I think, for me, I think in the first few years, it was very apparent that, I don't know whether there was a message from UK Sport that it was a numbers game, and I think it was quickly realised that they weren't going to hit the numbers that they needed to get from a UK Sport target. So, then I think the reset came, and I think you could definitely see it with AIP, that they relaxed a bit when they were just told it was more about the quality of the athlete volunteer appearance...'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

Despite being presented as a 'reset' it is evident that a number of the original principles for AIP outlined in the solicited Lottery application continued to inform the DY3 approach. It is therefore important to acknowledge that **the DY3 approach is focussed on revisiting the process for implementing agreed principles as opposed to a fundamental shift in direction as to its core purpose:**

*'When I reflect back, when you when you create that sort of paragraph of this is, this is the programme, this is what we want to achieve. That actually hasn't changed. We haven't changed the outcome at all. It's how we how we've got there, which I think is great.'* (Sport England Interview, October 2020)

To illustrate this with a specific example, the solicited Lottery application outlines AIP being 'athlete centred' so this is evidently not a new concept. However, as the DY3 model evolved evidence suggests that there is a clearer mechanism for delivering an athlete centred approach. The DY3 approach built from the learning of how effectively this principle was implemented through DY1 and 2 and used this to develop a more athlete centred approach:

*'...probably if we're honest, at the start of the programme, the visit, the actual deployment would be at the centre, whereas now the athlete would be at the centre. And that's the that's the key shift for me.'* (Sport England Interview, October 2020)

Central to this modified approach was a focus on **matching appearances opportunities with an athlete's interests and passions**. It is important to highlight that this principle of starting with an athlete's interest led to a **change in the narrative of how appearances were presented to athletes**. The conversation was now explicitly starting with what the athlete was interested in and a **recognition that appearances were something that could be of benefit to them as well**, as opposed to providing a list of appearances and asking which one/s the athlete might be interested in:

*'The other shift is that we have tried to work towards putting the athlete at the centre of this...So going forwards into this year the journey starts with the athletes in terms of what their interests and passions are and I think that is different to what we have done previously.'* (Athlete Inspire Manager, DY3 Boxing Meeting, April 2019)

In order to achieve this shift in the way that appearances were presented to athletes the main change for DY3 was the **introduction of the Regional Facilitator role:**

*'And the main change leading into DY3 was the introduction of regional facilitators. So, the guys on the ground who can provide the more local brokerage. We piloted that in the second half of DY2, and then built into the design in DY3. So that's the main change.'* (Athletes Inspire I interview, September 2020)

This was supported by a **different approach to training and support** for athletes relating to both preparation and delivery of appearances, particularly through the role of the AALs:

*'But their [the AAL] role has clearly changed in DY3, so it's less about being sort of centrally led and more about being responsive to athlete needs. So, it's about building the relationship behind the work of the RF, identifying the support need, support, rather than just training and trying to provide that to the athletes.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

The evidence that is presented throughout section 3 will highlight how the DY3 has been a more effective approach. It is clear that, a combination of factors, and principally the attempt to make this an **athlete centred** approach influences the **motivation to engage authentically** and the potential for impact on beneficiaries was therefore heightened. Boxer Niall Farrell expressed a strong opinion on this factor:

*'I think you can go to a school and you could have an impact on most of the kids there, but I think you have to want to do it more than anything, coz me just going there when I have to be there [won't work], but if you want to be there you will make a change.'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, April 2020, emphasis added)

A key point underpinning this reset were numerous observations regarding both the **flexibility in the approach** from UK Sport and Sport England as the client, and AI as the contractor, which has been acknowledged as important. The willingness to learn and adapt has enabled a model to be developed which better met the original aspirations for AIP:

*'The client welcomed our flexibility in our approach that's been taken, and the desire to try to get this right, without worrying about the fact that we've got things wrong, if that makes sense. So, we kept the good stuff, we move the bad stuff out and introduced new elements in...'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

*'I think that's one good thing about the AIP is that they were very adaptable. You know, they really, really took on board feedback, they really took on board, they really looked to the EIS and PLs to help them when it came to navigating, how are we going to work best with sports? How are we going to work best with athletes? And so, for me, a good strength of them is that they were very adaptable.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

## 3.2 Athlete Journey

### Summary of key learning points

5. The process of organising appearances is critical in order to maximise the benefits of volunteering appearances.
6. Key themes within the Athlete Journey are:
  - Explicit recognition of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders including the expectations on sports and the designated point of contact for AIP.

- The desire to properly 'contract' with sports on AIP including understanding how AIP could complement a sport's approach to AVAs.
  - The need for an explicit opting-in process by the athletes, given this was a voluntary programme.
  - The central importance of the athlete interests and passions discussions.
  - The desire to provide individualised support to meet the appearance related needs for athletes.
  - Facilitating the right deployment match between athlete and deployment host (DH) where there is mutual benefit.
7. The inclusion of launch events to directly introduce athletes to AIP was considered an important innovation to the Athlete Journey.
8. Whilst the Athlete Journey presents a framework there is a need to adapt and be flexible on a sport-by-sport basis. The building of trusting relationships was central to achieving this flexibility.

Within the reset there was an explicit recognition that **the process of organising appearances** is critical in order to maximise the benefits of volunteering appearances. Hence there was a strong desire to map the process with the Athlete Journey, and to demonstrate a consistent framework from which AIP could be approached going forwards.

The Athlete Journey mapping provided a mechanism to enable the delivery team to address some of the process challenges that had been identified through DY1 and DY2, for instance, regarding the flow of communications:

*'I think we learnt over the first two years about streamlining our communication, that I think at the start we overwhelmed NGBs with a number of people that work, been involved in contacting the NGBs, the athletes, etc.'* (Athletes Inspire interview, September 2020)

It was evident that when first presented in April 2019, the finer detail was still being finalised by the delivery team, and the full agendas for the sport introduction meetings often meant that the process was not fully discussed in substantive detail. However, through those meetings, and dialogue with sports thereafter there remained a consistency in the presentation of the main themes of the Athlete Journey. These included:

- **Explicit recognition of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders** including the **expectations on sports** and the **designated point of contact for AIP**. This included emphasis regarding the ongoing communications with the lead sport and/or PLA contact.
- The desire to **properly 'contract' with sports** via the initial sport introduction meetings, whether a sport was existing on AIP or new to the programme.
- The fact that this should **remain a voluntary programme for athletes** and there needed to be some kind of explicit opting in process by the athletes.
- The central importance of the **athlete interests and passions discussions** and ensuring there was an explicit of this stage in the process.

- The desire to create a dialogue regarding the **support needs for athletes**.
- Facilitating the right **deployment match** between athlete and deployment host (DH) where there is mutual benefit.
- The **early role that M&E needed to have** within the process in order to be able to follow a case study approach.

A number of the above principles directly supported the desire for a more athlete centred approach. The **more structured sport engagement process** was viewed as particularly important with the purpose of understanding how AIP could complement a sport's approach to AVAs, to ensure a consistent introduction to the new DY3 AIP approach, and to develop role clarity between those that would be involved in AIP, particularly with regards to expectations of the sport.

Over time the athlete recruitment dimension took the form of **launch events** to introduce AIP to prospective AIP athletes. With the exception of Para Athletics in DY1 there hadn't previously been an opportunity for AIP personnel to directly speak to athletes prior to their decision to join the programme. The athlete recruitment for AIP was led almost exclusively by the sports with little awareness of the different approaches adopted.

The first of these launch events took place with Wheelchair Basketball which emerged from dialogue with their Performance Director. Further commentary is provided relating to section 3.4 on sport engagement. Whilst the model was not universally successful it did provide an important variation of the Athlete Journey that worked with some sports.

It is important to acknowledge that adopting an *athlete first* approach creates additional steps that might not be in place in a more 'traditional' approach to AVAs, i.e. the interests and passions and engagement process alongside more iterative dialogue with deployment partners about the deployment relationship. Evidence from case studies highlights that this can result in a slower process to get to the appearance stage, with several months being common. However, conversely this approach may also assist with the ultimate fulfilment of an athlete's appearance commitments because successful matching exercises were often followed by a number of appearances in quick succession, and with it an altered perspective of what athlete volunteering appearances can be. Examples of this included:

- Para Cyclist Megan Giglia with Me, Myself and I offering support to Looked After Children within the Stockport area.
- Taekwondo player Rebecca McGowan with the Mancunian Way charity in Manchester.
- Boxer Niall Farrell with the Heritage Park School in Sheffield:

*'I feel like now I'm looking to go out into schools, when before it was like, I'll just wait till someone gets in contact with me do you know what I mean. And I think I think before like I said it was a chore. But then now it's like, I'm looking to push myself out there, I'm looking to better myself in that way.'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, Interview, October 2020)

Research suggests that, whilst still maintaining a line of sight to the key principles identified above, there have been varying degrees to which the Athlete Journey has been adhered to, with explicit recognition of the **need to adapt and be flexible on a sport-by-sport basis**:

*'I think the key thing is that journey varies from sport to sport, according to how the sport wants to work with their athletes. So, an example of that is in the journey, in theory, when Steve or James find an opportunity, they're supposed to present it to that to the NGB AIP link. Well, that that not happened because we've been able to build up really good trust, a positive relationship, James and Steve have so that we don't have to, we just bypass all of that, yes, the link is kept in the loop. So, they're aware of the opportunities. So, you can you know, it, I think it's about looking at that journey and working it through with an individual NGB about what's relevant for them and their culture. And, and adapting it accordingly.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

The importance of **building trusting relationships** was central to much of this flexibility:

*'PLA Helen Ferguson at Bisham Abbey was very tight on this at the start with us because she'd not worked with this before, so she wanted everything going through the process with her. And she then openly admitted, you know, she then built a good rapport with James and built, he built that trust, because she could see that he was he was working in the way that she wants to work with the athlete. So that step of putting everything through her has now disappeared, because she's happy for him to work directly with athletes.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

Appendix 6.5 summarises specific examples of where there has been an identified deviation in the athlete journey at a more granular level alongside identification of areas of good practice.

#### **Future Considerations** (*Delivery Model Evolution and Athlete Journey*)

FC1: Any future approaches to AVAs should **focus on establishing a set of principles that are informed by the AIP DY3 model**, as opposed to the development of a more tightly prescribed model. Evidence clearly highlights there are too many variances between sports for a more prescribed approach to be effective at scale.

FC2: An **'athlete centred' principle should be at the heart of any future AVA model**. This should explicitly include basing deployment opportunities around athletes interests and passions. This helps to generate a more engaged and authentic approach which offers greater potential for beneficiary impact.

### 3.3 Case Studies: Cumulative Learnings

#### *Summary of key learning points*

9. The case study approach has provided invaluable insights in helping to understand:
  - The facilitators and barriers in making impactful appearances happen (as addressed in detail across section 3).
  - The impacts on beneficiaries, from more immediate impacts on groups who attended athlete deployments, to more individualised impacts where the influence was more gradual or incremental. In some cases, the impact of athlete appearances was definitive and directly

measurable, however, there was also examples of where the impact was less tangible, more indirect and difficult to quantify, yet was clearly no less impactful on beneficiaries (see section 4).

The following offers insights into the cumulative themes identified throughout the case studies. The full case studies are appended separately to this report with the summary of findings in Appendix 6.1. The case studies have provided invaluable insights into the barriers, facilitators and potential successes related to athlete appearances. Whilst there are differences at the athlete, region, sport, geographical and support level, there are some identifiable themes throughout the period of the DY3 reset. These are summarised below and explored in further detail with specific evidence provided throughout section 3 of the report.

For ease of reading these findings are presented below as facilitators and barriers to successful athlete deployment experiences:

#### *Facilitators (What works well):*

- When an athlete has been unclear on what an appearance constitutes and how to access opportunities, the support provided by AIP has been an important factor in helping to provide focus.
- When athlete passions and interests are discussed, heard and understood by the individual responsible for facilitating a deployment match, successful relationships have developed leading to positive impacts for beneficiaries and athletes.
- The RF function being in place to make the deployment match. The most successful relationships are based on mutual benefits and where the deployment host demonstrates both a willingness and structure to offer meaningful volunteering opportunities.
- When the athlete is motivated to undertake the appearance.
  - Section 3.5 further explores the factors that influences motivation and engagement. For instance, a number of case study examples include motivation for athletes' own holistic development beyond their role within their sport (future employment, community engagement in charitable work such as mental health, at-risk-youth).
- When the athlete is able to tailor their approach to the setting. This happens when they are well briefed, understand the purpose of the appearance, the context they are going into and how they might impact on beneficiaries. This contributes towards the evidence which highlights beneficiaries are being inspired towards the targeted outcome identified by the deployment host.
- If an athlete sustains a long-term injury, appearances can form part of the psychological and social support required to maintain good mental health and valuing their contribution beyond performance.
- Where a repeat appearance model has been adopted, this creates a stronger relationship between athlete, deployment host and beneficiaries.



*Barriers (Challenges to consider):*

- The willingness and readiness of deployment hosts to support and host athletes.
- The myth that AVAs are primarily presenting to large audiences, e.g., school assemblies. The narrative of how AVAs are presented can lead to a 'tick box' approach and are a barrier to athlete engagement.
- The myth that doing school appearances is a negative thing. Whilst they are not right for all appearances, there are case studies involving school visits that are targeted and impactful for both beneficiary and athlete.
- A narrow view of the nature of what constitutes an appearance especially where those activities may not align well to the skills, confidence and interests of the athlete. Appearances don't have to involve being in the same room as the beneficiaries or public speaking.
- How much the athlete is encouraged to consider completing appearances for 'hard-to-reach' audiences if the athlete has no genuine interest in pursuing this avenue. The simultaneous desire to be athlete centred and then wanting appearances to engage 'hard-to-reach' audiences can be in conflict.
- Time delays in the athlete journey which can lead to disengagement on behalf of the athlete, deployment host and/or beneficiaries.
- Perceptions of unnecessary reporting around appearances can be a deterrent to engaging.

### 3.4 Sport Engagement

*Summary of key learning points*

10. Sport engagement is a clear driver for a more effective approach to volunteering appearances that was consistently referenced across the life of the project.
11. The important role that UK Sport can play as a facilitator of sport engagement has been identified by a number of stakeholders. This need is exacerbated by the broader context of how AVAs were perceived within many sports.
12. A number of stakeholders identified the culture of the sport as being critical to how a sport did or didn't engage with AIP.
13. The importance of securing senior commitment from within the sport, particularly from the performance side, was consistently reinforced.
14. In examples where sports have been positively engaged, they have integrated the work of AIP into their broader plans for personal development of the athletes.
15. There are perceptions that Paralympic sports were, on the whole, more engaged in AIP than Olympic sports.
16. The perceived value of launch events was highlighted by the AIP delivery team. The addition of this intervention which wasn't identified within the original Athlete Journey further illustrates the willingness of the AI delivery team to adapt and learn.

17. Whilst the evidence suggests issues with engagement present a barrier for progress, this alone not the single solution towards better achieving the objectives for AIP.
18. It takes time to build positive and trusted relationships with the sport (and PLA).

**Sport engagement is a clear driver for a more effective approach to volunteering appearances that was consistently referenced across the life of the project.** Right from the outset the NGBs were positioned as central to AIP by UK Sport. In reflecting on experiences in DY1 and DY2 the learning of the delivery team reinforced the important role that sports had to help make a success of AIP:

*'In our approach I think that we just saw the NGBs at the outset as being a route to get the athlete and then would build the athlete, the relationship with the athlete, and it's proven throughout that we have had to have the relationship with the NGB as well. So, there's another link in the chain if that makes sense.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

Whilst the evidence suggests that impactful appearances can be achieved without strong sport engagement, weaker buy-in from sports was certainly an inhibitor to success for AIP:

*'For an NGB to engage and make it worthwhile for athletes, it [AIP and volunteering appearances] has to have value within the NGB in terms of its business plan, within its set of priorities. So, it must be integrated and integral and embedded, rather than a nice to have on the side. Because if it's a nice to have, it will always stay marginal.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

A starting principle with the DY3 approach, as explicitly identified in the AIP Reset Model, is that sports invited onto AIP *'must have demonstrated real engagement / commitment to AIP within its own hierarchy.'*

This section explores the factors that influenced a sport's engagement in AIP and identifies how these might be addressed in any future approaches relating to AVAs.

### *System wide influence*

The **role that UK Sport can play** as a facilitator of sport engagement has been identified by a number of stakeholders, with a view from some that greater support could have been offered in the initial introduction of AIP:

*'I think that's where UK Sport could have helped AIP. And I've told this to Alison [Williams], where it was about helping them introducing them into the sports and saying, this is a UK Sport initiative, because they've [the sports] have seen as something external. But if this is a UK Sport initiative, AIP are delivering on it. We really want you to support this where you can. I just think the messaging could have been landed a bit better in that way.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

*'There needs to be up upline sell with the NGBs from UK Sport about the programme and the value for the sport for it to get anywhere.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

The importance of this support was like exacerbated by **the broader context of how AVAs were perceived within many sports**, and the need to communicate the value in the work. The AVA league table drives a numbers focus, whilst anecdotally appearances are reported to be seen by some in the system to not be an enabler of performance, and even possibly an inhibitor of performance in some eyes:

*'I know that it's a contracted thing [AVA's] but it doesn't impact on performance and that's why they're there to do [to perform] and the athletes are always going to prioritise their performance, rest, recovery and training...'* (Helen Galashan, PLA Interview, March 2020)

### *Strategic engagement within sports*

In exploring factors relating to engagement within a sport itself a number of stakeholders identified the **culture** of the sport as being critical:

*'I think it's always the culture and the PD that really sets whether or not a sport or the athletes embrace this. And so that's why I think it just varied. There are some sports that just saw it as a tick box exercise. And you could see that because the athletes weren't that engaged. And then you saw some sports where they said, this is really, really important. And we want this, you know, they had a mission, and they had it, it was an ethos wrapped around the NGB culture. And that's where the athletes embraced it.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

Culture takes on particular importance because of the lack of accountability within the way that AIP was overseen. There were no repercussions for a sport to opt into the programme and then fail to engage, despite the programme being an investment of National Lottery resources. It was therefore reliant on a sport to have a culture that embraced this work in order to see the value and choose to engage:

*'So, we've talked about positive buy in and so on, but the flip side of that is where it doesn't work well it's often because there's just generally a lack of accountability really, so people don't have to do AIP even if you're on the programme, if you will.'* (Steve Flynn, RF for Manchester and Sheffield, Interview, October 2020)

In one of the Olympic sports, culture was explicitly referenced as a barrier by the PLAs for that sport to engage in AIP. It was noted that the athletes only tended to engage in those mandatory elements of personal development and therefore, with AIP being seen as a voluntary initiative and with no importance placed on it by the performance staff, it was left to individual athletes to make a call on whether they wanted to participate. In that instance only one athlete from the sport completed their interests and passions conversation but they never progressed to being matched with a deployment partner. AAL Rachael Mackenzie recalled her experience of working with this particular sport:

*'Originally there was supposed to be 15 [at the launch event]. But we ended up dragging a few random athletes. And I think we had maybe three or four. And I felt like the response at the time from them [the athletes] was very positive. But as a sport, it didn't feel like they were supported to value visits at all. So as a sport, to me, it felt like athlete appearances are something that tick the box and are secondary to performance. And, and as a result, mean that engagement is, is really poor, because the athletes have obviously, are trying to make, particularly athletes we had who were all the academy [athletes], and trying your place in the proper team. So, the way that [sport x] is structured*

*means that that is at the expense of everything else. And actually, it's probably not great for the athletes, is it?' (Rachael Mackenzie Interview, October 2020)*

The importance of securing **senior commitment from within the sport**, particularly from the performance side, was consistently reinforced. This was particularly the case with some bigger Olympic sports:

*'With some of the Olympic sports that may be quite big, it's just if you haven't got in there with the NGB and you haven't really, you know, you haven't got a PD or a head coach on board, then it's very hard, hard to get the athletes on board, because of their training programmes and their competitions or anything like that.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

It is clear that not all sports saw the value in what AIP was offering as highlighted by Para Cycling, who declined the opportunity to attend an DY3 Sport Introduction meeting to hear about how the approach was shifting going forwards:

*'From a Para Cycling perspective there are no concerns regarding quality or quantity of AVA's and the focus for us over the next year or so would be completing AVA's at a point in the year that least impacts training and competition. This has already been discussed and a plan has been established already with most of the coaching groups, therefore, facilitation of deployment opportunities is not required.'* (Email from the PLA to AI, 26th April 2019)

GB Wheelchair Basketball was identified as the only sport where had director level involvement and this was directly attributed to why it was one of the more successful sports in terms of athlete engagement:

*'If you're trying to get something off the ground it helps if you've got senior buy in. And that's visible to the athletes as well so the athletes knew that this was something that the performance director, in the case of Wheelchair Basketball, that the performance director really believed in. And therefore, you know, it was something that they [the athletes]...'* (Steve Flynn, RF, Manchester and Sheffield, Interview, October 2020)

One of the strengths of the Wheelchair Basketball approach is how they have **integrated the work of AIP into their broader plans for personal development of the athletes**:

*'I think they [Wheelchair Basketball] get it, they can see the value of it. And if they can integrate into the culture, they're already starting to talk about how they're going to move it forward into a career development plan for each of their athletes. And if they value it, then you've got a greater chance of athletes valuing share in the personal development opportunities and performance development opportunities within it.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

There are some perceptions of the **differences between Olympic and Paralympic sports**, with perceptions of both the EIS and AI being that Paralympic sports were, on the whole, more engaged. Reasons for this included, seeing the opportunity to profile their sports, and the benefit of additional capacity to support in this area:

*'If I am truly honest some para sports, even though they get this, they don't get the same level of performance lifestyle at the moment, you know, they normally have a smaller FTE [full time equivalent performance lifestyle practitioner]. And so, when you're looking at the Olympic sports, they have a lot more FTE and a lot more done. So, it could be the cases where the PL practitioner or the sport could see this as a real benefit, because they haven't been able to do it in within their own programmes.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

Para Badminton were a sport who really welcomed the opportunity to be part of AIP. As a new Paralympic sport, their approach to AVAs was only emergent at the time of being invited to join the programme. Disability shooting too welcomed the opportunity of AIP with a significant proportion of its total Paralympic athletes on the programme. As a sport that is reportedly not well known within the public eye, the use of appearances has strategically impacted the NGB and the wider view of the sport itself:

*'Another part of it [discussing benefits of AIP] is, the more appearances we have, for what is a sport that's not particularly well known, and certainly the Paralympic have an angle of it even less so... to be able to get that message out through, through this means is, is really important.... just the opportunities for athletes to, to reach areas that they ordinarily might not, is a big one for the profile of the sport itself.'* (Duncan Turnbridge, NGB Lead for Disability Shooting, September 2020)

By contrast, for Para Cycling capacity concerns on the PLA were expressly given as a reason for opting out of AIP in DY3:

*'Following on from our catch-up earlier, the intention is not to pursue this programme again. There has not been significant feedback to suggest it was worthwhile and took a huge amount of resource from you [the PLA] which I believe could be better used in other ways. I also believe we could now deliver some/all of the content ourselves if required.'* (Email from senior manager at Para Cycling withdrawing from AIP, 16th April 2019)

### *Learning from the DY3 approach to sport engagement*

There was a clear understanding from the outset that it was important for sports to be bought into AIP not least as they were the conduit to the athletes. Indeed, the vast majority of AIP athletes were directly recruited to the programme by their sport, without direct engagement of the AIP delivery team. This only consciously changed in September 2019 with the first AIP launch event (for Wheelchair Basketball).

The perceived value of **launch events** was highlighted by the AIP delivery team, as touched upon in 3.2. In itself the addition of this intervention that wasn't identified within the original Athlete Journey further illustrates the willingness of AI to adapt and learn. However, whilst evidence has highlighted some positive benefits these launch events were not universally successful, specifically if the culture of a sport has not fully bought into the value of appearances first. Numerous examples draw the link between athletes seeing the value of appearances only if they perceive that sports also see the value. Therefore, whilst the launch event model has merit to explore for future funding cycles, potentially linked to athlete induction processes, it should not be seen as a default for the sport's buy-in to appearances. Steve Flynn highlighted the contrasts between two of the sports he was working with:

*'So, this wasn't something that the performance leads felt the athletes had to do [reference to sport x]. And therefore they, you know, by association, they didn't even have to turn up to the launch. Let alone, you know, the GB Wheelchair Basketball, British Wheelchair Basketball, you know, that the athletes almost had a directive to attend the launch from the performance director who also attended, were still given the opportunity to, you know, an option to participate or not in AIP. But you have to be there for the presentation.'* (Steve Flynn, RF Manchester and Sheffield, October 2020)

A perceived lack of engagement from the sport was noted as a key determinant for the lack of progress with achieving the objectives for AIP. The clear perception from the AI delivery team is that sport engagement can be a barrier. Examples of issues cited are:

- Level of engagement from sports within the sport introduction meetings.  
*'We've made significant strides this year with DY3 in terms of, do those elements work [referring to a move from a mechanistic centralised approach to more athlete centred]? Yes, they work much better [but] we still have had quite a lot of blockage in terms of sport engagement and sport prioritisation cause there's still a lack of sanction and...athlete availability'* (Martin Corck, March 2020)
- Perceived delays in receiving athlete lists for DY3.
- Ability to access training and competition schedules in order to help with planning appearances.
- Slow response times or lack of responses to email correspondence.

As part of understanding the theme of sport engagement it is important to also understand the rationale for sports opting out of the programme. Hockey is perhaps the most informative as they opted out of AIP after their DY3 sport introduction meeting:

*Since meeting with everyone we have had several subsequent conversations here at various levels (including with the PD and CEO) about our involvement in AIP. We have considered our current model of athlete appearances and what added value we feel the AIP will bring. We have also considered the wider performance context in the next year which involves qualification tournaments and hopefully Olympics for both squads. As a result of these discussions we have decided that now is not the best time for us to add an additional element to our appearance process with the AIP activity. While we don't feel now is the right time to play a 'formal' role in AIP we are really keen to stay connected to the programme and its outcomes, case studies, opportunities if you feel that is appropriate as you continue to develop the programme.* (Michaela Smith, Performance Operations Manager, England Hockey, Email correspondence, July 2019)

It is important to acknowledge that whilst the evidence suggests issues with engagement present a barrier for progress, this alone not the single solution towards better achieving the objectives for AIP. Examples of appearance sets being completed by athletes from less engaged sports (e.g., Para Cycling) suggest that a more **nuanced** understanding of **network/systems** operating around an athlete may be required.

A number of discussions with those involved within AIP acknowledged that **it takes time to build positive and trusted relationships with the sport (and PLA)**. Key elements of the DY3 approach that appear to have influenced this relationship development include:

- More streamlined communication approaches with sports, but with specific review sessions built in to check on progress.
- Consciously starting the conversation by working through the PLA (or sport contact). With the development of trust the AIP delivery team were increasingly able to engage more freely with athletes.
- Engaging PLA or sport contacts in the design of the launch events (where held) was seen as a particularly successful approach to getting more buy-in from key contacts.
- Fewer sports engaged on the programme enabled more time to be spent on developing individual relationships.
- Flexibility of the delivery team to work within the sport context and not just apply a prescriptive process to the work. An example of this was recognising that the interests and passions discussions could take place in different ways. For Wheelchair Basketball this was a more formal meeting, for Boxing this took the form of a quick informal chat in the gym.

#### *Future Considerations (Sport Engagement)*

**FC3: UK Sport have an important role to help champion and facilitate a whole system buy-in** to the value of AVAs. This includes:

- Re-framing the narrative around appearances in a positive way based on mutual opportunity and athlete benefits as well as social impact.
- Explicitly embedding AVAs within UK Sport's new strategy for the Paris cycle.
- Making a concerted effort to work with sports at different levels to help them understand the value of AVAs particularly at a strategic level and within performance teams.

**FC4: NGB engagement is critical.** Sports should be encouraged to consider how AVAs form part of their responsibilities relating to both delivering a social impact, and as part of an athlete's personal development. The launch event model for AVAs has merit and might be explored as part of a new focus on AVAs, potentially linked to athlete induction processes.

### 3.5 Athlete Engagement

#### *Summary of key learning points*

19. DY3 has seen a discernible shift in athlete engagement and the perception of volunteering appearances from a number of AIP athletes. This was not universal across all AIP athletes.
20. Athlete engagement is very often intrinsically linked to sport engagement, with the value that a sport places on AIP strongly influencing the value that athletes felt. However, sport engagement isn't the only barrier, there are clearly other influences to understand.
21. Evidence strongly suggests that the way in which appearances are presented to athletes and how they are measured influences athlete perceptions and behaviours. Changing the narrative

that is used to describe athlete appearances helps athletes to re-evaluate what volunteer appearances could mean for them.

22. Where athletes perceive appearances to be 'tokenistic' or a tick box exercise, it would appear that athletes can become disengaged.
23. Creating the right first impressions is critical to helping to unlock positive engagement, and this includes ensuring the athlete voice is heard in terms of both the subject matter and preferences on the nature of appearances that fits with their interests and passions.
24. Taking time to build trust and understand the individual is important. For many there are personal challenges to be overcome in undertaking appearances.
25. Athletes appear to be effective at managing their commitments to ensure that appearances do not impact negatively on their training schedules.
26. Training and competition schedules were however a frequently cited negative influence on engagement levels with a prioritisation on performance goals meaning that appearances can be de-prioritised. However, it is notable that where athletes have had a positive matching experience, they have been able to find the time for appearances.
27. Appearances can be a beneficial tool to provide a positive alternative focus for those athletes who are injured.
28. Whilst not as conclusive, there is evidence to highlight the role that experience, stage of sporting career, and the ability to undertake group appearances play in supporting athlete engagement.
29. There is an opportunity to directly tie in appearances as part of an athlete's personal development plan.

Evidence highlights that DY3 saw a discernible shift in athlete engagement from a number of AIP athletes. However, as presented in table 2.3 this must be balanced with an understanding that not all AIP athletes engaged fully within the programme. This section seeks to outline the factors that have positively and negatively influenced athlete engagement.

### *NGB influence*

Section 3.4 presents clear evidence that **athlete engagement is very often intrinsically linked to sport engagement, with the value that a sport places on AIP strongly influencing the value that athletes felt:**

*'So regardless of whether or not it [an appearance] comes from AIP, or it comes from the sport, if the sport doesn't value, the appearances and you get I get this sense from the athletes, that the athletes also don't value, the appearances.'* (Rachael Mackenzie, AAL interview, October 2020)

Referencing her experience with one Olympic sport Rachael noted:

*'The conversation as part of that [launch event] was definitely indicated to me that they didn't feel like the sport valued it. And as a result, they [the athletes] couldn't understand how it would be beneficial to them.'* (Rachael Mackenzie, AAL interview, October 2020)



However, other sports did outwardly value the importance of meaningful appearances which, in the case of Disability Shooting, has been attributed to AIP's involvement. As a member of the senior management explains:

*'The attitudes, of the NGB is, is, as I said earlier, every opportunity we've got to publicise the sport, our athletes and their achievements is, is welcome and the routes that the athletes are going down probably, channels and opportunities that we wouldn't have had with that AIP.'* (Duncan Turnbridge, NGB Lead for Disability Shooting, September 2020)

Wheelchair Basketball has been cited as perhaps the best example of senior sport engagement in AIP which has helped to have a positive effect. However, it is important to note that whilst a lack of sport engagement is seen as a barrier to athlete engagement, there are clearly other influences to understand. Even in the case of Wheelchair Basketball, not all of the AIP athletes from that sport completed AIP appearances during DY3:

*'So, with wheelchair basketball, and the PD there Jayne Ellis was really keen to be involved from the start of DY3 and wanted the whole of the women's squad to be involved. So obviously, we met with her originally, we then did a launch with those athletes. And, yes, we haven't got hundred percent of those athletes involved. But looking through the numbers, you know, five of those athletes now have done a good healthy set of repeat appearances. And we're at a stage where Jayne is really keen in the transition process for the athletes to reflect on what they've achieved through AIP and put together an action plan for January sort of moving forward. So, I think that that's, you know, that's a good reflection where you've clearly got a senior member of the of the sport involved...'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

### *Changing the narrative of volunteering appearances*

**The narrative that is used to describe athlete appearances is a key influencer on athlete engagement.** The nature of what constitutes a volunteering appearance has been a theme of analysis running across AIP from DY1. As this relates to Athlete Volunteering Appearances (AVAs) more generally, it is impossible to separate AIP from this analysis. **Evidence strongly suggests that the way in which appearances are presented to athletes and how they are measured (i.e., a league table) influences athlete perceptions and behaviours.**

In responding to the brief set by UK Sport and Sport England, AI has sought to build a project that is focussed on generating impact for beneficiaries, but in being athlete centred and developed around individualised, purposeful appearances and activities, it also supports athletes in benefitting personally. However, it is evident that this narrative was very different to how many athletes perceived volunteering appearances. Wheelchair Basketballer Sarah Hope sums up the sentiment of many when saying:

*'I had done some [appearances] in the previous year [2018] but I honestly can't remember what I did. When I joined the [GB] programme I was made aware of the fact that these appearances were part of the package. There wasn't a whole lot of information from my NGB about how we were supposed to go about securing those, so I did do a few but not to the level that I'm doing now. I think, you know, it was probably just feeling a little bit lost – I had this commitment to do a certain number of volunteer appearances, but didn't know how to go about doing them. When I did secure them [I*

*was unsure] what I was supposed to be doing, what I was supposed to be saying, how I was supposed to be approaching people ... selling yourself as an asset is still something that isn't particularly natural to me.'* (Sarah Hope, Wheelchair Basketball Athlete, Interview June, 2020)

**Where athletes perceive appearances to be 'tokenistic' or a tick box exercise, it would appear that athletes can become disengaged**, as outlined at a system level by the EIS, and also highlighted by the case of disability shooter Jimmy Bevis:

*'You get some athletes that were really, really, you know, passionate about going out and volunteering and have things in place. And they did it because they want to, but you also had those athletes that were really struggling and they just felt it was a tick box exercise and how I know I have to do it, some of them complied and some of them just didn't bother.'* (EIS interview, November 2020)

*'I like to talk to people who are very like-minded and interested...I suppose over the years I spoke to so many people who don't even seem that interested...and then I think why do I even bother you know I've, I've come here today I've taken a day out of my training and they don't even look that interested at all so I could have just been at home cycling, shooting, so then of course the next time I get asked I'll be like no you know, when you're forty three you know I'm a bloke I can just you know, I don't need this...I know what I need to achieve how I need to achieve it...I don't need to do this [to] please this person or please this person...if people want me to help and show interest then I will help'* (Jimmy Bevis, Athlete Interview, March 2020)

Research suggests that the approach in DY3 has connected with many athletes and helped lead to a **discernible shift in the way that a number of AIP athletes perceived volunteering appearances. Changing the narrative to talk about what interests the athlete and highlighting that there are benefits for them in doing appearances, drives improved athlete engagement.** Andy Barrow (AAL, Sheffield) outlined the many benefits of integrating the athlete interests and passions within initial discussions about potential deployments:

*'It's absolutely fast-tracked engagement, if athletes are doing stuff that they really care about, and taking the time to have that conversation, to have not done that was a massive false economy. And you're absolutely ruling out stuff that athletes don't want to do at the beginning ... but just finding out what they care about and what lights them up is so important ... and then to be able to go somewhere and speak from lived experience is just so invaluable because it's the authenticity that that brings.'* (Andy Barrow, interview, October 2020)

Even in instances where athletes have been involved in AIP from cohort 1 or 2 but perhaps not the most engaged, the DY3 approach was able to reframe their perspective on appearances. As an example, the matching of personal interests and passions with potential deployment organisations had particular salience for Wheelchair Basketball player Jude Hamer, as did the emphasis on a 'repeat appearance' model, where athletes built on-going relationships with deployment hosts. She explained:

*'They [the NGB] set up the initial meetings with Steve [Flynn] and Ali [Williams] and Andy [Barrow] and we had to like go along to those and I guess our level of engagement after that has been up to us. So, yeah, the governing body were quite influential in the first instance but since then a lot of us have taken it and run with it ourselves. Having [AIP staff] coming in and talk about what we wanted to work on, who we wanted to work with, it was just more interesting to get the opportunity to think*

*about what we might get out of it. So, I think if you're more engaged with it, you're more likely to put more work into it. So that's why I've been so engaged with it this time, I guess, that it was more personalised to us and not just to tick a box for UK Sport. (Jude Hamer, Wheelchair Basketball Athlete, interview June 2020)*

Furthermore, Jude outlined the benefits of the DY3 approach and illustrated how it **helped athletes to re-imagine the notion of AVAs**. Jude recalled:

*'He [Steve Flynn] kind of got us all to think about where we wanted to go with our own journey with appearances, which is quite daunting when all you've known before is schools. When you get put in a room and they tell you it's about appearances, everyone's like 'it's going into schools again' and a lot of people just don't want to do that. So, for him to come in and go 'What do you want to do?', 'Where do you want to end up?', 'Do you want to work with charities in your local area so you can establish connections at home?', 'What else are you interested in?' was different. No one has ever really asked us that before. It was a bit daunting at first, to have a blank piece of paper and suggest anything. And it took me about a week to think about what I'd actually like to work on and then I remembered about Steps and then I was like there are so many other things that I could work with that are a bit more niche about me that are not just about basketball and getting people into sport. So, I just went into him and said 'I'd really like to work with this charity – they worked for my parents when I was growing up, I'd really like to connect with them' and within a couple of weeks he'd set up the meeting.'* Jude Hamer, Wheelchair Basketball Athlete, interview June 2020)

When creating a narrative focussed on an athlete's interests and passions it is important to be explicit that **this address both the subject matter and the nature of the appearance**. In the case of Wheelchair Basketballer Sarah Hope, as well as providing insight into Sarah's interests around autism and capturing her enthusiasm for volunteering with related organisations such as NAS, the interests and passions discussion also identified that she had a preference for doing virtual appearances as opposed to visits 'in person'. Steve Flynn reflected on this discussion and how this helped to shape an appropriate deployment:

*'It was quite clear this was where she wanted to provide some support, but it was also clear that she didn't want to attend events. Even back then she was thinking that she wanted to do stuff on-line and do blogs and vlogs and not do in-person appearances - just largely because of her own condition, but that's how she felt comfortable.'* (Steve Flynn, RF, Sheffield, June 2020)

It is important to note that as part of any future re-positioning of the narrative relating to AVAs there is a need to address the tension between the simultaneous mandatory and voluntary nature of appearances. Recognising the current challenges caused by this duality the PLA for boxing suggested that athlete appearances should be made mandatory as part of the conditions of an Athlete Performance Award (APA):

*'I feel like they should be doing it rather than to be asked. I feel like it should be mandated that they do volunteer appearances with them getting APA tax free, I feel like they should be giving something back to the essentially the people who pay their wages.'* (James Hooper, Boxing PLA, interview March 2020)

### *The value of AIP support taking a personalised approach*

There is a lot of evidence to highlight the importance of AIP **creating the right first impressions** being critical to helping to unlock positive engagement. This includes the initial launch events and the link to the initial interests and passions discussion and was underpinned by **making sure the athlete voice was clearly being listened to**. The **RF role is seen as key** within this:

*'For me, I would say, building on the RF pilot that we did in DY2, I think that, to me, has been fundamental in terms of starting with that RF contact with the athlete and looking at their interests and passions. I think that's unlocked the barrier around athlete engagement.'* (Athlete Inspire Interview, September 2020)

For some athletes it is clear that the value of the RF role (and by definition AIP) can be as simple as being able to help them to source meaningful appearances:

*'The people who are connecting you, know ways to connect you. I think a lot of people [athletes] on the programme won't have an idea how to even go about setting up themselves, so I think that takes a massive barrier out of it because I would not have a clue about how to connect or arrange appearances. When I first got put on APA, I had four months to try and get my five appearances in, something stupid like that, because I wasn't aware of it. So, the appearances can be a nightmare because you're so stressed about getting them done and you want to get them done and not leave them to the last minute, so I guess it helps quite a lot having Steve and Andy to help.'* (Kayla Bell, Wheelchair Basketballer, Case Study, October 2020)

It is important to underline the importance of the athlete centred model really getting to **understand the starting point for each athlete when it comes to appearances**. In the case of people like disability shooter Jimmy Bevis, the scale of the personal challenge that needed to be overcome was quite significant. The Regional Facilitator reflected on an early conversation in the progress portal report. He wrote:

*'Really doesn't get excited by appearances – would much rather be training or with his family. The few days building up to an appearance makes him very nervous and physically feels sick. Would much rather be working on the same level; 1:1 or small groups. Doesn't want to be built up as something big and important. Doesn't like being in a place where people use big words and make him feel stupid. Likes coaching and does it regularly when he can. Geographically wants to be very local to his house in Devon. Does feel he could help new athletes to know what to expect when they go to their first competitions.'* (James Cavalier, RF Bisham, RF progress portal)

The impact of overcoming these personal challenges are potentially path changing for athletes. The NGB lead reflects on this in particular when discussing the role of the RF and Jimmy Bevis:

*'[Jimmy] has been in the sport nearly 15 years, and he's got a lot of experience, and it really, it really gives him value to, to pass on that knowledge and that, that understanding to, to younger athletes, and it's just given him so much more confidence in, in himself in his, his ability to pass on that knowledge and given him also the confidence to look at sort of post shooting what he might do. And it's given him more confidence to sort of go down the coaching route, that previously he might not have thought he was capable of. So just absolutely huge benefits for James potentially, you know,*

*potentially life changing really, in terms of the sort of future direction of where he takes his life when he decides to stop shooting.’ (Duncan Turnbridge, NGB Lead for Disability Shooting, September 2020)*

The listening exercise with the athletes should also include developing an understanding of the **nature of the appearances** as well. This is reflected in both the Jimmy Bevis and Sarah Hope examples highlighted.

In the case of Kayla Bell, Steve Flynn reflected upon how the identification of Kayla's interest in mental health was a critical success factor. More specifically, Steve outlined how the opportunity for Kayla to **share her personal experience** of mental health issues **added an authenticity to her appearances which had the potential to make them more impactful:**

*‘At the end of the day, in her case, it was authentic, you know she’s not coming in and speaking in general terms, she’s able to speak from her lived experience, which is relatable. And she’s still quite young herself, so she’s not lecturing. She’s being open and honest and sharing. And that supports what Place2Be are trying to do, which is support young people and encourage young people to speak [about their mental health challenges]. And that’s made easier when you have somebody coming in who’s achieving despite the fact that she’s had her own challenges. So it is that authenticity, I think’. (Steve Flynn, RF Manchester and Sheffield, interview, June 2020)*

This authenticity was also identified with Steps and Jude Hamer, the Charity were more drawn to the authenticity of Jude’s personal story rather than her being an athlete per se.

### *Managing expectations*

It is important to acknowledge that changing the narrative around volunteering appearances alone won’t fully unlock an athlete’s engagement, and there is **a need to manage expectations regarding what is achievable:**

*‘It’s a bit about managing your own expectations, because I think you’re never going to get 100% unless it’s got a monetary value.’ (EIS interview, November 2020)*

There is a need to understand that athletes often tended to **engage with AIP on the basis of current priorities** which may mean that appearance targets are de-prioritised and not fulfilled. For example, in boxing, training and competition priorities have taken precedence:

*‘... Lewis came together with the sports department [of the identified deployment host], and for one reason or another we could never get them together. They were keen to have his involvement around programmed activity with their students, but the dates just didn’t work out with Lewis’ dates. So, that was just really problematic and even though the appearances were scheduled for January this year, Lewis couldn’t make it because of his training commitments.*

*[I] think [engagement with AIP] comes down to the priority level of the athlete. Lewis has been in full training so the volunteer appearances and this side of being a world class athlete has probably been a little bit lower than Niall’s due to that injury.’ (James Hooper, Boxing PLA, interview March 2020)*

**Training and competition schedules** were a frequently cited negative influence on engagement levels. It is important to recognise that athletes appear to be effective at managing their commitments to ensure that appearances do not impact negatively on their training schedules. Evidence from the DY2 report showed that of the 171 appearances logged by athletes on the AIP appearance portal in DY2:

- 135/171 (79%) did not feel their training schedule was interrupted
- 33/171 (19%) felt that their schedule was interrupted but that this was not an issue
- 3/171 (1.75%) felt their schedule was interrupted and this caused an issue – of these, two were self-organised and one was organised through AI.

Conversely appearances can be a beneficial tool to **provide a positive alternative focus for those athletes who are injured**, as highlighted in the case of boxer Niall Farrell:

*I feel like it's been different for me than Lewis [Williams]. So, because Lewis has been training and obviously fighting and that when for me, I've been kind of putting my putting my energy into going into schools and doing my bit because obviously me not fighting, I haven't boxed for like two years now. I've had to kind of keep the training up, keep working, but put my focus into something else, because I half knew in the back of my head ain't going to fight for a while. (Niall Farrell, Boxer, Interview October 2020)*

Evidence suggests that **where athletes have had a positive matching experience, they have been able to find the time for appearances**. This doesn't necessarily mean they will happen quickly but there has been a commitment of the athletes to repeat appearances. One such example of this is para cyclist Ben Watson. Ben openly acknowledged that training and competition priorities were central to how he managed his commitments to voluntary appearances. However, in the case of his relationship with the EY Foundation Ben took taken a longer-term view and this continued over a period when Ben stated that he had to decline deployment opportunities due to lack of availability - there was a 7-month time lag between his second and third appearances with the EY Foundation.

When considering the theme of athlete engagement, it is really important that this **isn't seen as a default to appearances taking place really quickly**. As highlighted in 3.2 the Athlete Journey has specific steps designed to build engagement as opposed to a more transactional model of appearance-athlete matching that could be developed. Even where athletes can clearly be identified as 'engaged' with AIP the case studies highlight that the initial process from engagement with the athlete to first appearance can take several months. The ability to find the right deployment host organisation and the right appearance opportunity, at a time that matched the athlete's availability, are consistent steps in the process even when it is possible to identify an athlete that really wants to do appearances. A number of the case studies highlight that the appearance process has been shown to speed up after initial appearances were undertaken if the initial experience is a positive one.

### *Other potential influences on athlete engagement*

The **level of athlete experience** as an influencer of engagement provides a mixed picture. There was never clarity across the programme about who AIP was targeting, and subsequently sports adopted their own decision-making processes in the recruitment of AIP athletes. As identified through the DY1 and DY2 learnings where there was a sense from sports that AIP was more suited as a

programme to lesser experienced athletes. Feedback from athletes on the way that training sessions were pitched reinforced this.

From a recruitment standpoint this has followed through to DY3. For instance, Cycling and Para Cycling makes an interesting comparison – the same PLA was involved in the opt out decision for Para Cyclists stating the athletes were experienced and could have done this themselves, but subsequently was involved in the inclusion of Cycling, but with a specific focus on the Academy riders, the new, youngest riders on their performance programme.

In contrast feedback from AAL Rachael Mackenzie highlighted a slightly different profile of athlete who was well suited to AIP focussing on their **independence and lived experience**:

*'I think that the athletes who are more independent generally seem to be more engaged in their appearances. And by that, I mean more independent in terms of the way they manage their whole life. And, but I think just probably more of a, probably the athletes were a little bit further along in their journey. So, the academy riders, obviously were very young, didn't feel like they had much of a story. Whereas the diving and the snow sport athletes, and the boxing athletes that I had conversations with were a little bit older. And if they weren't older in terms of age, that they'd have more of a difficult ride. So there, I suppose social perspective, was slightly broader than those athletes from maybe Taekwondo or Cycling, that were part of my team. And, and maybe part of the reluctance, and certainly expressed by some other cyclists, the reluctance to do visits was about them feeling like they didn't have a story yet, because they didn't have a medal, or they haven't had a long-term experience, yet.'* (Rachael Mackenzie interview, October 2020)

**Stage of sporting career** may influence engagement levels for some athletes, but it is inconclusive on the whole. There are case studies from Para Cyclists who explicitly identified post career aspirations as being central to their choice for deployment route. For instance, with regards to Para Cyclist Neil Fachie wanted to use the appearances as an opportunity to road test his models for a future career. Neil commented:

*'I am planning to go down the route of performance coaching. This forced me to step out of comfort zone and create the content.'* (Neil Fachie, Athlete Interview, October 2019)

Another approach to developing athlete engagement was seen with Taekwondo whose approach to AVAs has seen them develop **group appearances** where multiple athletes undertake the same appearance. The reported feedback from this was positive, particularly in the way that more senior/experienced athletes were able to mentor younger athletes, who could use this as an opportunity to listen and observe older athletes and reflect on their own involvement in future appearances. Whilst this example is outside of AIP it is relevant to include, not least as it is an observation that has been identified in other projects of a similar nature that the M&E team have knowledge of.

### *Positioning as part of an athlete's personal development plan?*

By changing the narrative around volunteering appearances to being something that could also benefit themselves as athletes, this aligns the work much more to the focus of PLAs and helps to identify how appearances can tie in directly as **part of an athlete's personal development plan**:

*'I think we need to work out the best way of doing that. I feel that it should be in a way as part of their personal development plan if that exists and I think it should exist for every athlete as it does for every student who has their academic plan, they should have their professional development plan. For me it is almost a form of employability really, a chance to get an athlete out there engaging with the real world but it does need to be part of an overall development plan. Where that sits within the organisation, whether it sits with the lifestyle advisor etc. etc. it's not just a bolt on if you fancy it sort of thing.'* (Steve Flynn, RF Manchester and Sheffield, March 2020).

As the work continued to evolve Steve's view on the importance of the PLA role was further strengthened:

*'I'd say, the relationship with, with the lead within the sport [is key] as well, the PL in most instances, and because for this to work... it really needs to be an extension of the work they do or needs to be aligned to the work that the PL is doing, athlete by athlete and across the sport as a whole, really.'* (Steve Flynn, RF Manchester and Sheffield, October 2020)

This was a point reinforced by Andy Barrow, who also saw the central importance of the PLA within efforts to assist with athlete engagement and orient the athlete with the wider, longer-term benefits of AIP:

*I think PL buy-in is massive, and I think that would be a big dividing factor between other sports that haven't had the engagement because it's not just the athletes saying, 'I don't want to do it', it's somebody further up saying 'this is unimportant, don't waste your time on it' (Andy Barrow, AAL, Sheffield, October 2020).*

This focus on appearances as personal development is reflected in Taekwondo where the PLA talked about AVAs being an explicit objective in her work programme and not an add-on and was something she reported back on to colleagues within the NGB.

### 3.6 Training and Support

#### *Summary of key learning points*

30. There is clear evidence of support needs that athletes have to help provide them with the confidence and skills to undertake effective volunteering appearances.
31. The move to a more individualised offer of support to athletes in DY3 has made a positive impact in helping athletes to improve their confidence to undertake appearances and also to be more proactive in taking advantage of opportunities.
32. Relationships are key, and it takes time for the AIP support roles to build trust with both sports and the individual athletes.
33. The roles of AAL and RF have been shown to work harmoniously together, playing to the respective strengths of individuals in these roles, and providing a rounded and effective package of support to athletes.



## The need for a DY3 refocus

### Training

The evolution of the DY3 model has seen formal group training de-emphasised from what AI identified was a 'mechanistic centralised approach' in previous years. This has led to a shift from group-based training towards individualised support for athletes and whilst training and mentoring were identified as two distinct interventions as part of AIP in DY1 and DY2, they have been brought together in one section for this final report to align to the way they have been delivered over DY3:

*I think that we moved away from the concept of training, particularly group training, towards the word support. So it wasn't just training, it was support we're trying to offer, and then the RF, sitting down and identifying needs. And in the AALs, who then support their offering, it didn't really matter whether it didn't fit that training mould. And going forward, it's about support to the athlete. (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)*

Support for this approach was highlighted with the EIS and individual PLAs who recognised the difficulty in pitching group-based training session at, what could often be, a broad spectrum of athlete experiences in the same session:

*'We've got to be very aware that you'll have people with different abilities and confidence and when it goes to doing AVAs, and so that's where you just need to be flexible, it's not worth, you're going to lose someone who's been in the system for like 10-12 years and have done a lot of things and expect them to sit next to someone that's been here two years that is very, like green. So, I think you definitely need that flexible approach. And that individual approach.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

*'...there needs to be a much more individualised approach [as] the reason that I've had athletes not wanting to carry on the programme is because they didn't feel they were getting anything from it and that's not to say that AIP couldn't deliver something for them, but I think you've got a big spectrum of athletes with [a] completely different range of experiences in terms of doing appearances...you're never going to hit everybody with that approach...'* (Helen Galashan, PLA Interview, March 2020)

Whilst stakeholders have noted that generic grouped based training was not as effective it is important to highlight that there was some positive feedback on what was delivered in DY1/2 that should not be ignored. Athlete post session feedback was largely positive, whilst anecdotal feedback from sports observed positive development of skills and confidence of some AIP athletes as a result of AIP training. Going forwards a number of sports identified there could be a role for some targeted group-based sessions working with lesser experienced athletes for instance, whilst a couple of DY1 sports identified the potential value of the training in helping to upskill them to enable them to support athletes directly.

It is however evident that there is some carryover in views on training delivered in DY2 which influences how the training need, and AIP more generally had been perceived in DY3. This is highlighted in the case of para cyclist Ben Watson:

*'I got the sense the training sessions hadn't been as well received. He was relatively new to the World Class Programme as I understood. The conversation was ok with him. I got a sense he was maybe a little cynical of the overall project – born from the training and the bureaucracy of logging the*

appearances. He was the most vocal when it came to that.’ (Steve Flynn, RF interview, March 2020)

## Mentoring

The mentoring support had already seen a shift between DY1 and DY2. The DY1 M&E report highlighted questions relating to role clarity aligned to core purpose of the APM (Athlete Peer Mentor role, as it was known prior to DY2). Challenges identified included:

- Mentees never or rarely asked for a pep talk before an appearance.
- The majority of mentees never or rarely de-briefed with their APM.
- APMs were saying they weren’t hearing about doing appearances.
- There was apparent lack of clarity with athletes about what the mentoring is.
- A number of the APMs viewed mentoring in the truest sense of the term trying to be all things to all athletes but not all athletes needed that.

The definition of support evolved from ‘mentor’ to ‘liaison’ born out of a need to clarify distinct roles between PLA and AI staff. This can be, in part, attributed to the original Athlete Needs Analysis conducted at the start of AIP where only 35% of athletes identified mentoring as a need. One AAL identified this as a historical issue, noting that:

*‘The word mentor [to athletes and sports] was more than the Athlete Inspire Programme was there to deliver, it caused confusion, and the perception was that we were standing on toes of people and processes already in place.’ (Gorgs Geike, AAL for Bisham Abbey, March 2020)*

In DY2 the AALs reported seeing that the revised/refocussed role was helping them to have a greater engagement and impact in their role with supporting athletes with appearances. The evidence across the programme continued to highlight that it takes time for AALs/mentors to develop trusted relationships with athletes. This was not helped in some sports where there was a turnover of mentors, and in one case there were questions raised as to the fit of the specific mentors for that sport:

*‘The problem with Manchester, it was at the point where there had been a disconnect with AIP and British Cycling. I had connected with [the British Cycling senior manager] independently to reinforce the importance of AIP and keeping the athletes on board. There was a bit of apathy from his point of view for further training. There had also been a high turnover of AIP of staff. There had been 2-3 iterations of the athlete mentor role. It wasn’t that clear what support looked like at that point. There hadn’t been an established AAL.’ (Steve Flynn, RF interview, March 2020)*

## Understanding the level of support needs

Whilst the take up of both training sessions and mentoring support was mixed across DY1 and 2 an evidence of need was identified. Of the 171 DY2 appearances logged in the portal by AIP athletes, 47 logs (27%) highlighted additional training or support that the athletes thought would have helped prepared them for the appearance. Across these 47 logs, reported levels of confidence were lower (3.76/5) in comparison to the average confidence across the total data set (4.44/5).

The case of para cyclist Neil Fachie perhaps indicates the challenge for AIP of how to ensure their offer of training and mentoring support was visible and understood. Neil's case study with a Manchester Law Firm arose from the Manchester Local Deployment Pilot and was therefore working within the DY2 approach to training and support.

It was evident that Neil Fachie was undertaking a *'huge time commitment to do the planning and create the content'* for his AIP appearances with the Manchester Law Firm referencing that each appearance took 2+ hours to prepare for. Neil noted that he spoke to a couple of people and did some research but *'still felt massively underprepared. I had planned well but until you do it you still don't know.... It probably would have helped to test my general structure plan past somebody. I was wasting time and trying to do too much.'* When asked whether he asked for support via AIP Neil said *'a lot has been talking about storytelling. I did ask questions. I almost forgot there was an option there to go to. I either forgot or chose not to use it.'* (Neil Fachie, Athlete Interview, October 2019)

### *A more individualised approach to support*

Moving into DY3 the identification of support needs for athletes was recognised as an important step on the athlete journey (see appendix 6.3) and in the initial months of DY3 there was a recurring theme that this has not been a major focus of the work. This was initially put down to a combination of factors:

- The athlete not being asked/prompted by either the sport or AIP.
- The athlete not thinking to ask for help from AIP.
- The athlete not understanding the type of support that might be available.
- A number of athletes not yet being progressed enough through the Athlete Journey to be at the stage of talking about specific support needs for specific deployment opportunities.

However, through the regular reviews adopted by the delivery team they were able to identify this challenge and respond accordingly, ensuring a greater focus on identifying and providing support around appearances. The nature and value of this support has come to life through the case studies.

The case studies identify that an **individualised** programme where the AAL is a safety net to support athletes when they might lack confidence or skill to do an appearance is key. In an interview with Gorgs Geikie (Bisham AAL) it was clear that this individualised approach has been key in the case study of Jimmy Bevis (disability shooting). She suggested that there needs to be some:

*'Effective questioning...the I'm here for you type approach, and then he might start to open up...him as a person he's got these two kinds of parallel, opposing characteristics of being confident but really not confident at the same time. That probably goes for a lot of athletes, they're very confident in their sporting environment outside of that they're very nervous...it's being there to support him.'* (Gorgs Geike, AAL interview, March 2020)

When asked about how this is manifested, the response was *'to be that back up...for him to understand if he wants more help in being able to deliver [deployment]...I'm kind of like the safety net'*. This open-ended approach sits alongside the role of the PLA and there continued to be questions as to the degree of role clarity between the two. The notion of 'treading on toes' of existing support mechanisms within a sport was something which emerged from interview data:

*'So AAL stands for Athlete Appearance Liaison. I think what we wanted to do was differentiate this programme from a standard mentoring programme because we didn't want to be treading on the toes of any of the performance lifestyle advisors.'* (Andy Barrow, AAL interview, March 2020)

One of the new training and support innovations in DY3 was the advent of a private YouTube channel with various learning resources to help provide support to the athletes. Boxer Lewis Williams outlined the value of this:

*'That [the YouTube channel] was quite helpful just to 'Okay, you go watch that then you come to us and then we'll, then we'll work on it from there, blah, blah, blah. And if there's any bits you struggle on, come back to me.' And I thought that was quite good because obviously you're learning these new skills and you don't want to be learning it simply on the job where you're messing up in front of, you know, an assembly of a couple hundred kids.'* (Lewis Williams, Boxer, October 2020)

The evidence highlights that **relationships are key** and recruitment of the right individuals to the AAL role is important. Andy Barrow outlined his approach to developing a positive relationship with boxer Niall Farrell:

*'...I'll always contact athletes first and say, "is it alright for me to go and see them" and I keep the relationship really at a higher level until that point, because I don't feel like I can build a good relationship with an athlete until I've actually looked them in the eye, been and had a chat with them. So then after that, as soon as I went up there to see Niall [Farrell, GB Boxing], we had a good chat over coffee and again, the first couple of times you just keep it light, you know you're just finding out, you know, what the person's all about, asking about training. And that's where I guess, having said we're not a mentoring programme, there's a really low level of just making friends, sharing common experiences, almost on a really low level, just giving quantifications during that process.'* (Andy Barrow, AAL interview, March 2020)

From Niall's own feedback we know this approach was valuable for him personally and helped him gain confidence to undertake appearances. When referring to his relationship with Andy Barrow (AAL) and Steve Flynn (RF):

*'The support's been brilliant. If you need anything, everyone's just a message away. And I feel like due to obviously, the team, I think that's made me gain confidence, because they've kind of supported me and said, 'Look, you've got it' do you know what I mean like, when I've needed it, 'don't worry about it'...And spoke to me, and I think that's the big one cause like. I could all go to a school like and be a bit like 'I don't know' but if someone's going to you 'listen, you know what you've got to do, just, all you've got to do now is just get there'.... I mean, I think that's the main reason people won't want to go into schools because they don't know how, they haven't got no one supporting them in that way.'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, October 2020)

When considering the support on offer the RF role was viewed by sports as part of the support package and it is evident that in the Sheffield region, that Steve and Andy worked well together.

At a sport level the narratives of those connected with British Wheelchair Basketball highlighted the exceptional support provided by AIP to ensure that athletes were well-prepared for undertaking

appearances but also available to discuss on-going support needs through a mentoring approach. In capturing this support at a general level, Jayne Ellis praised the support on offer. Jayne explained:

*'There were several reasons for wanting to use AIP, but the resources that come with this programme - Steve and Andy - their help has been invaluable to get [appearances] moving so it can become part of what we [as an NGB] do, not just a 'you need to do your five appearances'. When you're an athlete with us, there is an expectation that you'll give back, and this [AIP] gave us the opportunity to pilot that.'* (Jayne Ellis, Wheelchair Basketball Performance Director, Interview September 2020)

Sarah Hope also outlined how she had benefited from the support of AIP staff and that they had nurtured her from being anxious about undertaking appearances to becoming not only more confident, but also more pro-active in optimising opportunities to extend her involvement. In particular, Sarah observed how Steve and Andy brought different, yet complementary, skills to their support package which proved valuable throughout her AIP journey. She reflected:

*'As soon as I agreed to be part of the AIP programme in the first place Andy was my contact. We did a couple of workshops with him and he would follow up occasionally through email or WhatsApp. Andy's been more of a mentor. If I've told him I've got an appearance coming up in however many months, he'll know and he'll WhatsApp me the night before, you know 'anything you need?' and WhatsApp me afterwards 'how did it go? Do you want to talk about anything?' So, more of a mentor when it comes to appearances.'*

*Since lockdown I've had two Skype meetings with Andy to discuss what we can be doing through lockdown and how appearances can change and that sort of thing. Whereas Steve, it's a little bit more formal with Steve ... I get emails with Steve, it's a little bit more business, I guess, whereas Andy's happy to chat things through, ask 'is there anything you want to do?', 'is there any training you might need?' He's very much more informal, just checking in, giving ideas, helping out in that sort of way.'* (Sarah Hope, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview, June 2020)

Jayne Ellis also commented on the harmonious manner in which Steve and Andy utilised their collective experience of high-performance sport to provide support to athletes in their respective roles. She mentioned:

*'I think that what they bring is experience and pragmatism. So, Andy has been through this whole thing, he understands the barriers that face our players and what they may experience outside of the programme. Andy brings a wealth of knowledge in that and the players respect him as well because of him being an athlete himself and transitioning really effectively, so there's a respect there. And what Steve brings is just that connection, the knowledge, the pragmatism. He understands the world of elite sport, when they [the athletes] will be under pressure to deliver, when you need to step back, when there's a gap in the schedule to get a bit more work done. In order for this to work, you've got to have people who understand when to turn things up and when to turn things down, and those two do that really well.'* (Jayne Ellis, Wheelchair Basketball Performance Director, Interview September 2020)

Andy Barrow provided some further reflection on the working relationship he had developed with Steve Flynn and offered an 'insider' perspective on how their roles were able to dovetail and draw

upon their prior experiences of the elite sport context, whilst also recognising the need to understand each other's roles and what they each needed to bring to the athlete support relationship:

*'I think the use of the Regional Facilitator and the Athlete Appearance Liaison in tandem is quite powerful ... the point is that we can almost double-team the athlete if we want slightly more engagement and we're there as a bit of a forum to keep account of each other. I think it's everyone in their role. I think with AAL's [previous elite sport experience] is important – it's just that credibility piece. With RFs, [that previous experience of elite sport] is a massive string to the bow, but the most important thing about an RF is them having a network and them having an understanding of where to place people.'* (Andy Barrow, AAL Sheffield, April 2020)

However, it is worth noting that while the relationships between RF's and AAL's are successful, at times the **logistical barriers** particularly around Bisham reportedly hindered the ability of the AIP staff to maximise their skillset and relationship with each other and athlete as the Bisham RF explains:

*'The anticipation when I joined the programme was that the athletes would be focused around that area and the opportunities, I could link them with where the people that I already knew and trusted and would be a good fit based on their interests and passions. So that was a challenge because as we've covered before, we've got athletes in Walsall, Portsmouth, Dawlish, Exeter, Gloucester. Very very, very rarely are they around Bisham Abbey, Marlow, Maidenhead areas. Got a few rowers in Henley. Umm... so that was definitely a challenge. And I would say my face-to-face time with the athletes was generally at Bisley. Access into Caversham was very, very tough so I would have to speak to the rowers remotely or occasionally at Bisham.'* (James Cavalier, Bisham RF, December 2020)

James continued by stating the **importance of direct access to athletes** when providing individualised support, working well with the PL Helen Ferguson where they were involved in:

*'...setting up WhatsApp groups with the athlete myself and Gorgs, the AAL. It's been really good.... but yeah, just generally having direct access to the athlete. This was important.'* (James Cavalier, Bisham RF, December 2020)

### 3.7 Roles

#### *Summary of key learning points*

34. It is clear that relationship management, at all levels, is key, especially given the number of potential direct and indirect influences over appearances (athlete, RF, PLA, NGB contact, deployment host, AAL, central AI team).
35. There is clear evidence to highlight that the RF role is fundamental to the success of this approach. The core function of helping to source appropriate appearance opportunities is something that very few sports have the capacity or expertise to be able to resource themselves.
36. To be successful the RF needs to build strong relationships with the sport, the athlete, and the deployment host organisation.

37. The interrelationship between the RF and AAL as support roles around the athlete has been evidenced to be effective, and in some instances has involved the RF taking on more of a co-mentoring role.
38. The value of the AAL in the DY3 is clearly evidenced, and this has been informed of the learnings of where the model was not quite as effective in earlier years of the programme.
39. The AALs background as former athletes themselves really helped to build empathy, alongside the individualised approach with each athlete to recognise the skills and experience they already had, and what support they would find most beneficial.
40. There is inevitably a degree of overlap between the RF, AAL and PLA roles, but this is not necessarily a negative thing, so long as the initial contracting had taken place to agree how the roles would work together within a given sport.
41. Where trust developed between the PLA and AIP delivery team, more flexibility would be shown regarding different stages on the Athlete Journey, for instance, being comfortable for the RF to lead on the athlete interests and passions discussions.
42. The variance about the perceived capacity of the PLAs across the system to support AVAs was highlighted as a potential risk to any future models around appearances

With the move to a more individualised package of training and support for athletes, the focus became much more about the support roles as opposed to formalised pieces of learning content. Across a number of sections above, reference is made to the different AIP delivery roles, and the importance of developing relationships, particularly when working in a high-performance sport system. It is therefore important to understand more about the effectiveness of the key AIP delivery roles and, in particular, their interrelationship with the PLA role.

### *The Regional Facilitator*

As noted, the RF role was identified as one of the main changes with the DY3 reset with its presence enabling a fundamental shift in the approach to deployment. It is clear from the evidence that **the RF role has been fundamental to the success of this approach**. Without it there is very limited capacity or expertise within the high performance to be able to pick this type of function up, i.e., a network and knowledge to be able to find suitable deployment opportunities:

*'And I think we've seen real success with the RFs because they've become more central in the athlete journey in the actual process, in the system itself.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

*'I think the main thing is, it wasn't the onus on the PL advisors to help the athlete find the athlete volunteer appearance. So, there was the regional person that was in then and could help with that. So, I think that worked.'* (EIS interview, November 2020)

Taekwondo was the only sport that intimated that they had the capacity to look at something like this through a combination of the PLA and NGB comms person who both had responsibilities for appearances.

To be successful in the RF role required **strong relationship skills**, and there were three dimensions to this. Firstly, it was critical to build trust with the NGB and PLA contacts in terms of being able to work with the athletes. This has been highlighted in the analysis of the Athlete Journey in the way more flexibility could be applied where trust was developed.

Secondly, the network and ability to build a network to source suitable deployment host organisations was clearly central to the role. Finally, was the need to build the trust with the athlete. This is something that has evolved from the original iteration of the Athlete Journey where it was envisaged that the PLA would be the individual having the interests and passions discussions:

*So, I think in terms of the facilitator, I think that's fundamental, really is getting to know the athletes getting their trust. And then it's, you know, it's twofold, because then you've got to be able to go out and have a network or develop a network that allows you to meet or to fulfil the needs of the athlete. So, you know, I think that's, that's a critical part as well. And just being creative in the way that you identify opportunities for the athlete. (Steve Flynn, RF interview, October 2020)*

Implicit within the relationship development was the understanding that the RF's job was to **help meet the needs of both the athlete and the deployment host organisation**, as in doing so was the best way to achieve an impact from the appearances:

*'You got to have, you've got to build relationships and understanding with the host organisations as well, particularly, if you're trying to genuinely create some degree of impact, you've got to know that actually, what you're offering in terms of an athlete opportunity or an athlete appearance, activity, is going to meet the needs of the host as well. And to try and create that fit. And, you know, there have been occasions where that has been clear, or it's become clear that that wasn't going to work.'* (Steve Flynn, RF interview, October 2020)

Part of the skill of the RF role has been the learning that, it might take a little time to find the fit with a prospective host organisation:

*'I've had situations where it's been 'Thanks, but no thanks' or I've just not heard back, and I suppose if you're an athlete ... and you're just speculatively reaching out, you tend to take the first rebuttal as a sign. Whereas, what I'm learning is it isn't that it doesn't mean they're not interested, they just don't know what or how [an appearance might work]. Where there isn't a clear and obvious activity that the athlete can support, I can ask those questions, you know, 'Do you have a website? 'Do you run workshops, annual events?', where I can just peel away some of the layers and identify what might be a good fit.'* (Steve Flynn Interview, Jude Hamer Case Study)

Even when a fit has been identified it came take time logistically to get athlete and host together as the James Cavalier explains:

*'...some of it is just a lack of communication between groups. So I could be chasing an athlete a couple of times and not hearing back and at that point you know a month's past I hear back from the athlete, and then I don't hear back from the host. And it's really quite tough to get both groups responsive at the same time.'* (James Cavalier, RF, Bisham)



James Cavalier has a unique perspective on meeting the needs of both sides of the relationship between AIP and the deployment host, as in the case of Jimmy Bevis he was both the Bisham RF along with a deployment host. When interviewed following the national Covid-19 lockdown James highlighted potentially why at this current time hosts are unable to prioritize appearances:

*'And I don't think that's [the prioritization of appearances by hosts] really been picked up as much as it should have been. It's not about the athletes, really. It's about the lack of hosts. That are willing to prioritize it and I use myself as an example with James Bevis; that obviously does some mentoring with the athletes that my company Active in the Community work with, and he's been doing some online mentoring with them, which has been really well received. But he's available, but for me right now as you know a director of Active the Community, my focus is not so much on OK, let's get the next set of mentoring appearances sorted, its making sure that we've got enough money coming in to pay our salaries.'* (James Cavalier, Bisham RF, December 2020)

It is evident that there was some variation in regional implementation of the role. For example, Steve Flynn has adopted a stronger ongoing support role in his approach to becoming **more of a co-mentor** to many of the athletes he was working with:

*'It's very black and white in that I'm facilitating that kind or negotiating a kind of an arrangement between an athlete in an organisation, but in other instances, as I've got to know the athletes, it's almost evolved into the kind of mentoring role that's or co mentoring role with the with the Athlete Liaison.'* (Steve Flynn, RF Interview, October 2020)

Implicit within the athlete relationship has been developing an understanding of the career stage, and how this might impact upon the approach with each athlete:

*'It's being driven by them as to what they need at that point in their career or personal development, you know, clearly, we're got athletes who are coming to the end, perhaps the end of their career in sport and are looking for external experiences or opportunities or maybe just you know, preparing for to transition. So, you know, we, you know, we look to how maybe some of these AIP opportunities are going to help shape that transition for them, as opposed to other athletes who still try to work out, I guess where they were, what their interests are, and what their, you know, preferences are at this stage. It's largely athlete driven.'* (Steve Flynn, RF interview, October 2020)

Included in the athlete relationship is a deeper understanding of not only the athlete but the person outside of their respective sport and competition. As identified by Steve, James too reflects on the importance of this work as one that enables individuals to engage with transition:

*'There was looking beyond them as competing athlete and they can inspire and stuff while they're doing it, but ... and they can do those one-off appearances I think that's fine if they choose to do it and use their position to, to inspire people, but I think you have a responsibility to the athlete; that their career as a competitor is very short. So actually, what, what are you doing with the athlete beyond competition so that we're not wasting their talents once they stop competing. That's a really core bit for me. And actually the AIP bit is very bespoke to that individual.'* (James Cavalier, RF interview, December 2020)

There is perhaps no better endorsement of the RF function than the value placed in the support by athletes themselves:

*'I like Steve and he has good contacts. The rest of the programme based on my experience didn't benefit me and was a negative experience. I can't get over how good Steve is at that role. He takes time and is an engaging human being. He is not afraid of asking those conversations, like 'what do you guys want'? That is really good.'* (Ben Watson, Athlete interview, January 2020)

*'Yeah, I think we've had a brilliant relationship [with Steve Flynn] to be honest. I think it's helped me loads. Anything I need about an appearance or something like that he was always at the end of the phone. The first time I met him he popped into the gym [and] we got speaking there and it just went from there, it just did me good. Straight away I knew he was a good bloke, and he had my best interests at heart.'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, Interview March 2020).

*'The athletes themselves hopefully this afternoon, will repeat that and will tell you what a good job he's [James Cavalier] done in terms of just really getting to know them and finding appearances that fit with, with the way they see the world.'* (Duncan Turnbridge, NGB Lead Disability Shooting, September 2020)

### *The Athlete Appearance Liaison*

Section 3.6 has touched on much of the value of the AAL role as they, alongside the RF, became positioned as the central focus for support in DY3, as opposed to having the AAL and formal group training.

However, as touched upon previously the AAL role is one where the focus had shifted slightly year on year, based on learning that it wasn't quite fulfilling its purpose across the programme. Rachael Mackenzie joined as an AAL in DY2 and her reflections highlight the positive evolution of the role:

*'I think the role evolved slightly over that first year [DY2]. So, Steve [Flynn, leading on the Manchester local pilot] joined after me. And initially, it was very much around supporting athletes securing their visit, and then it in the course of that year, and I suppose almost a little bit by accident, it became more about supporting the athletes to make an impact. Well, that's how it felt. And so initially, it was quite adminy. And then it sort of progressed in a more positive way, I felt it was more positive, in terms of supporting the athletes.'* (Rachael Mackenzie, AAL Interview, October 2020)

Consistent with the analysis of the RF role, the ability for the AAL to **build trusted relationships with the athletes** was of central importance. The AAL focus in DY3 appears to have been better focussed, which is where the value has started to show through in the case studies developed.

One of the reasons for this with DY3 is the **improved focus and greater time commitment that AALs had to develop the relationships** with athletes. In DY1 and DY2, due to the scale at which the programme was trying to work, analysis noted that the allocated time for each individual athlete was more restricted. In shifting the focus (and budget) away from group-based training this afforded greater opportunity for the AALs to develop the individual relationships.

Allied to this, the presence of the RF role was seen as complementary in helping the AALs to focus on the support function, and the harmonious relationships between AAL and RFs have been noted as a real benefit, for instance with Wheelchair Basketball.

Building effective relationships was a harder challenge for the AALs in some instances, again influenced heavily by what has gone before them. In some sports there was a turnover of AALs across the programme meaning there was no continuity of relationship. This was noted in interviews with both Taekwondo and Para Cycling for instance:

*'I think the problem with the Taekwondo athletes was that they'd had a number of AALs. So, their relationship with the project in terms of that AAL support was already a little bit fractured.'* (Rachael Mackenzie interview, October 2020)

Where the relationships did form well, observations were made by both sports and athletes that the AALs background **as former athletes themselves really helped to build empathy**, whilst working in an **individualised** way with each athlete to recognise the skills and experience they already had, and what support they would find most beneficial. This is well summed up by Wheelchair Basketballer Jude Hamer commenting on the support she had received from Andy Barrow prior to conducting appearances, and how she had welcomed the opportunity to discuss elements of undertaking appearances in a 'peer-to-peer' fashion rather than as formal training. Jude explained:

*'I really like Andy, I guess we've had similar training – obviously he's done more public speaking than I have – but I've never felt like he's come into a situation and tried to teach me, like he's not trying to talk down to me. If he talks to me it's on a level and he respects that I have some experience of public speaking and done some of the same training as him.'* (Jude Hamer, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview June 2020).

However, experience in the particular sporting discipline itself is reportedly not critical to the AAL's success in their role. Gorgs Gieke (AAL Bisham) explains that while her knowledge of shooting has allowed her to relate to the Disability Shooting athletes it shouldn't be a prerequisite for AAL's. When asked if to what extent do you think UK Sport needs to explore if the ALLs from the sport or not her response was "It doesn't matter."

### *Understanding the interrelationship between RF, AAL, and PLA*

In considering the contribution of the RF and AAL roles, it is really important to understand the interrelationship that they had with the NGB AIP contacts, and in particular with the PLA role, as a key athlete interface within the sports, who very often had responsibilities relating to AVAs.

It has been acknowledged that there is inevitably a degree of overlap between the roles, but this is not necessarily a negative thing, so long as the initial **contracting conversation** had taken place to agree how the roles would work together within a given sport:

*'I think you've got to understand that there might be a level of overlap, but that's alright, if you've had the contracting in place, and everybody's aware of it, you know, because you could stray into those different areas. But I think is once you've had the contracting, I think it's alright.... But I think in our world in the EIS, there is always, we work within a multidisciplinary team so an athlete always have a*

*lot of support around them. But it is just to be clear and have clarity of roles and responsibilities which is really important.'* (EIS Interview, November 2020)

This does reinforce many of the learning points relating to sport engagement and the Athlete Journey with the emphasis of trying to embed a positive working relationship with the sport and the key personnel within the sport from an early point in the process.

**Clearly defined roles and responsibilities related** were important. Feedback was largely positive as to how this had been managed on a sport-by-sport basis but there was one sport where that didn't work, and this ultimately undermined the whole AIP relationship:

*'A particular practitioner felt that a mentor [the RF] was helping with an area where it was a PLs, like seeking job opportunities. So, I think that muddied the waters. And that muddied the relationship with that sport. So, it was no ifs or buts after that, I think the sport was very reluctant to be involved in that was because the mentor went off to another tangent. So, for me, as I said, at the time, I just think to clear the air, you just need to be able to have the PL advisor or the NGB because it was the PL, and the comms and the mentor speaking and just saying like, this is our role in that is that role. And I think, in that particular sport, it went too far, where they just didn't feel that they could engage anymore. Well, I think if they would have been open and honest, up front, that might look very different.'* (EIS interview, November 2020)

As confirmed by EIS, the original intention was for the PLAs to take a formal role in the Athlete Journey, leading on the interests and passions discussions:

*'I think it was when I set the set it up that the advisors were there to look at interest and stuff like that, of the of the athlete.'* (EIS Interview, October 2020)

Where it would work well the PLA was also well placed to support the RF and AAL in working with individual athletes. As explained by EIS:

*'So they're all also there and on hand to tell AIP 'well, actually, we've done a public speaking workshop, so we don't those athletes that need to do it, they may need to do this.' So I thought it was two pronged so they looked at the athletes interest, but they also were there to say, well, actually, we've done that type of training, I would really with this athlete, I think they really need a bit more around confidence or a bit more around presentation or whatever.'* (EIS interview, November 2020)

An example of this is the Bisham team where RF attributed his success in initially building relationships with athletes to the proactiveness of the region's PLA:

*'Yeah, if I hadn't been able to do it face to face or [the PLA] hadn't given me access for as long so if I'd only had five minutes with the athletes, which is what I was told may be the case. I wouldn't have been able to, to be as successful as we manage to be with the Bisham athletes. So yeah, definitely having the right PL with the right buy in, the right access and establishing the right lines of communication. Without any of those, it just wouldn't work.'* (James Cavalier, Bisham RF, March 2020)

In reality the way the interests and passions discussions took place were reported as being much more weighted to the RFs. Across all AIP athletes the RFs reported that they were involved in every single interests and passions discussion in DY3. Of these the only discussions to involve a PLA were the four Para Badminton players, and the 'first 3 or 4 discussions down in Bisley (Para-shooting)'. The PLAs made the introductions but were not in attendance with at least 34 (over three quarters) of the athlete cohort for DY3.

This is not a critique of the PLAs but highlights the important roles the RFs played. Reasons for this were cited as being a result of 1. limited PLA capacity for this work, and 2. the trust that the PLAs were building with the RFs.

The AIP delivery team needed to be aware of these variances of approach across sports:

*'One of the challenges with this is, as we've seen with AVAs, as we see with commercial appearances, or what have you, there's an inconsistency across sports, as to how they tackle this. And some areas it sits with marketing it sits with commercial or communications, it's with the PL, there's not a defined resource that exists really for supporting this, across the sporting community. And when this is when, when it's a kind of bolt on to your job, it's not necessarily, you know, it won't be in your job description, it won't be something that people look for in your person, person spec when they recruited you, when it's a bolt on, it generally means it's quite low down the pecking order of priorities.'* (Steve Flynn, RF Manchester and Sheffield, Interview October 2020)

In a positive sense it was highlighted that AIP could help create capacity for the PLA to focus on other priorities within their role:

*'It was about how our work helped allow the PLA to go and focus on, I guess, more important priorities with an athlete, you know, whether that's helping with their education opportunity, or, you know, whatever, whatever it is, it's about showing how the programme builds capacity for other, for other things.'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

As reported, Taekwondo is one example where AVAs were an explicit objective with the PLAs job description. However, this variance about perceived capacity of the PLAs across the system to support AVAs was also highlighted as a potential risk to any future models around appearances:

*'If they're going to use PLAs as, as the key contact point for the NGBs, it's [got to be] written into the PLAs work programme. That it's got adequate capacity and resource time, particularly given that the PLAs a part of EIS rather than a UK sport, per se. That is where the biggest risk is for me going forward...'* (Athletes Inspire Interview, September 2020)

### *Other support roles*

Whilst the focus of the analysis has been on the athlete facing roles, it would be remiss not to comment on the programme coordination function that has been provided by AI. The AIP Team Leader role has been largely behind the scenes within the DY3 approach but has played an important coordination function across the AI Delivery Team, ensuring consistency of approach where needed and helping to facilitate the sharing of learning. The role has also been important from both a sport and client facing

relationship management perspective. Irrespective of the nature of any future AVA approach this programme coordination function should not be underestimated.

#### **Future Considerations** (*Training and Support; Roles*)

- FC5: An **individualised model of training and support** has been shown to be the most effective and valued by athletes. Further consideration should be given to how such capacity and expertise can be created to build athletes confidence and skills to undertake effective appearances. This includes the potential development of a peer-to-peer model with more experienced athletes offering guidance and support to more junior athletes.
- FC6: The **Regional Facilitator (RF) function is critical** to help find the right deployment opportunities and should be an integral function within any future approach. It is evident that this function could be fulfilled in different ways, for instance, there are individual sports who have (now or in the future) the desire, skills and capacity to source deployment opportunities, or there could be more of a regional model (shared resource across sports) creating economies of scales with an RF working on a place and utilising local networks (locally or centrally funded). If the resource was external to the sport it would be important to ensure there is an initial contracting process with the sport to ensure role clarity between the different roles supporting AVAs.
- FC7: Any future RF function needs to understand the principles of **developing value-added deployment relationships**, i.e., a model based on relationships and repeat appearances that is aligned to athlete interests and creates a mutual win-win.
- FC8: The **Performance Lifestyle Advisor** role is important in supporting AVAs and should be explicitly aligned to position the work around athlete personal development. However, capacity for this role is a risk factor and needs formalising. If there isn't the capacity to meet the need, an alternative solution would be needed by the sport.

### 3.8 Deployment

#### *Summary of key learning points*

43. Deployment relationships have worked best when the opportunity is individualised and based on athletes interests and passions.
44. Where a positive match between athlete and deployment host is made, the repeat appearance model is shown to be an effective approach in helping to maximise the impacts of appearances.
45. The RF role is critical in being able to source appropriate opportunities that match the athletes interests and passions, and also to working with those deployment hosts to create a good fit.
46. Finding the win-win relationship between deployment host (DH) and athlete is key.

47. It is important that prospective deployment hosts also have a structure in place to be able to manage and deploy athletes.
48. The DY3 approach has presented a way to reimagine what an appearance can be, with impactful virtual appearances developed.
49. Given the time and resource commitment that goes into finding the right fit with prospective deployment hosts in terms of desire, readiness and opportunity, the challenges of replicating this deployment approach at scale should not be underestimated.
50. There are opportunities for strategic deployment relationships working with Sport England (and the National Lottery more broadly) to create synergistic opportunities that AIP could tap into which could add value to these programmes.

The approach to deployment was the biggest shift in the DY3 model, led by the work of the RF. Analysis of the DY3 approach has highlighted that deployment opportunities appeared to be more athlete centred and were being defined by the mutually beneficial relationship between the athlete and the deployment host. What has emerged is a clear need to better understand athlete appearances as activities. The one size fits all approach of school or club appearances with a speech is not appealing to, or engaging for, many athletes:

*'My interest is in corporate and professional services. I have spent a lot of time in that environment in my previous life. I was a chartered surveyor. Also it is more likely with people my age. I wasn't overly interested in schools. It sounds horrible but you can get quite ill in schools.'* (Ben Watson, Athlete interview, January 2020).

### Regional variations

Some regional variations were observed. The lessons from Manchester provided a similar template to follow for the RF in Sheffield, even though the RF, by his own admission, didn't start a strong network of contacts within that region. The progress shown with progressing deployment relationships with a number of Sheffield based athletes indicates that these principles are transferable.

In contrast Bisham provides an interesting comparator. The deployment model for DY3 was based around centrally based sports and this was part of the original stated intention in identifying Bisham. However, the approach did not emerge that way with Hockey (centralised sport) opting out at the outset of DY3 and the other two sports operating on a decentralised basis. This provides a different set of challenges in terms of deployment matching to organisations in different areas of the country, where the RF was specifically recruited for his networks and knowledge in the Bisham area. By his own acknowledgement James did not have an existing network of contacts in lots of different areas of the country to work from.

This highlights a flaw with the original strategy for identifying Bisham, with the decentralised nature of two of the three identified sports not flagged as part of the early decision making. The unintended opportunity through the way that Bisham has evolved means that AIP has also been able to test how the process can adapt and work for decentralised sports. This also influenced the RF in Manchester

and Sheffield to explicitly suggest to athletes that they may wish to explore appearance opportunities closer to their home rather than training base.

### *Key features of the DY3 deployment approach*

Central to the deployment model for DY3 has been on developing meaningful relationships between athlete and deployment host which was based around the principles of a **repeat appearance model**. Evidence suggests that this has been an effective approach to helping to maximise impact as highlighted by boxer Niall Farrell in his repeat appearances with pupils with behaviour challenges:

*'I think to get the most out of the kids the school, that Heritage Park, obviously was a behaviour school. And I feel like with them, I had to be there more, to show them, I am there for them. And I think that was the big thing for that. And if you're, I think it's the same with anything like, I could meet you and Lewis, and you'll get a first impression. And then if I don't see you again, then you're out of sight out of mind. But if I if I kept seeing you two every week and going back and just not not even doing anything, sometimes I wouldn't even like try and tell them. I would just speak to them. And you know, like and that just showed them I was there week after week after week. Like, I think I went there about six times.'* (Niall Farrell interview, October 2020)

The repeat appearance model has involved explicitly recognising the **benefits and development opportunities for athlete, sport, deployment host and beneficiaries** through the emergent relationships.

This **complexity of liaising with deployment host** is a key issue given the actor network involved (athlete, host, sport, beneficiary):

*'You've got to build relationships and understanding with the host organisations as well, particularly, if you're trying to genuinely create some degree of impact, you've got to know that actually, what you're offering in terms of an athlete opportunity or an athlete appearance activity, is going to meet the needs of the host as well. And to try and create that fit. And, you know, there have been occasions where that has been clear, or it's become clear that that wasn't going to work.'* (Steve Flynn, RF for Manchester and Sheffield, October 2020)

James Cavalier (RF for Bisham region) highlighted that matching some of the athlete needs whilst also meeting the host needs can be a challenge:

*'He then put another challenge to me in terms of he doesn't want to go more than twenty minutes from his house (Dawlish in Devon is by the water) ... [later saying]... he also didn't want to leave his house.'* (James Cavalier, RF, Bisham, March 2020).

It is evident that **finding the win-win relationship between deployment host (DH) and athlete is key**. At times it was reported that this could be a challenge because this model presents a different dynamic to many other appearances where the athlete is often approached with requests, as opposed to here where **the athlete is making the approach** to the organisation (via the RF). In referring to his experience with a Manchester Law Firm Neil Fachie said:



*'It felt as though they were doing me a favour rather than a great opportunity.... It felt like I had to win them over a bit to start with.'* (Neil Fachie, Athlete Interview, October 2019)

This dynamic of needing the appetite from both sides of the deployment relationship was also identified by the RF:

*'The challenge is we are offering them something they [the deployment host] haven't asked for. Certainly not in the timeframe we might want... Where this model falls down is if there isn't hunger on both sides.'* (Steve Flynn, Regional Facilitator Interview, November 2019).

Jude Hamer's relationship with the Steps charity is one which illustrates the type of win-win that could be brokered:

*'I just went into him and said 'I'd really like to work with this charity – they worked for my parents when I was growing up, I'd really like to connect with them' and within a couple of weeks he'd set up the meeting.'* (Jude Hamer, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview June 2020).

The main attraction for Steps was the clear overlap between Jude's lived experience with a lower-limb condition and the aims of the charity, with Jude's profile as an elite athlete an added bonus:

*'Steve contacted us and mentioned that Jude wanted to support our charity. For us, she is the perfect fit because she's a Paralympian that was born with a condition that we specialise in, and she has experiences of both [leg-lengthening surgery and amputation] which is obviously challenging for a child and her experience is unique. And that's the reason why we've struggled to find the right ambassadors. We didn't have ambassadors for a long time until Jude came along, because I was against having ambassadors being ambassadors just because they were famous. They don't know how to interact with the children ... they can be a disappointment, and there's nothing worse for a charity than to have an ambassador who disappoints your beneficiaries.'* (Deployment Host, Steps, Interview September 2020).

Learning shows that a desire alone on behalf of a deployment host is not enough, it is **important that prospective deployment hosts also have a structure in place to be able to manage and deploy athletes** (in a way that aligns to their specific interests). Without this there is a risk that the match will not be effective:

- Reflecting on a 'failed match' with an organisation *'I got the sense they didn't quite know how to take advantage of the opportunity. It felt like they were trying to accommodate us rather than exploit [the opportunity] in a meaningful way.* (Steve Flynn, RF interview, March 2020)
- *However tactfully, I do try to make sure they [the deployment host] fully understands the opportunity, the nature of the partnership and the commitment that is required of them to make it work. There is a due diligence. On paper it looked like a really good fit. The private sector aren't necessarily geared up for doing these sorts of things. A bit like the sports themselves there is a bit of an ad hoc approach. Going forwards I will look to position as part of a Trust, Foundation or associated charity [of a corporate organisation] rather than embedded in commercial activities. That influenced the EY discussions. It felt like a nice marriage of the two. And it influenced the KPMG discussion [related to a Taekwondo athlete].* (Steve Flynn, RF interview, March 2020)

- *'It [the relationship] was positive. I was clear on my purpose. I was another person to help inspire them...I fitted neatly in. It was a difference with Bruntwood, it felt a bit shoe horned in.'* (Ben Watson, Para Cyclist, Interview, January 2020)

There will always be challenges, with the tensions of matching availability around training and competition schedules frequently highlighted:

*'The time when they [the athletes] were all travelling around was a barrier, and will continue to be, you know, the matching times with when people, when the organisations are available for appearances, and will always be a barrier.'* (Rachael Mackenzie AAL interview, October 2020)

With a more holistic view across a calendar year evidence has shown that these practical challenges have not prevented an athlete from undertaking repeat AIP appearances with the same deployment host, if they have had a positive first experience.

Given the time and resource commitment that goes into finding the right fit with prospective deployment hosts in terms of desire, readiness and opportunity, the **challenges of replicating this deployment approach at scale should not be underestimated**. Having strong local networks and mapping local initiatives in an area can help but the approach is time consuming and there may need to be adaptations if there was a desire to work at scale across more of the high-performance sport system.

#### *Re-imagining what an appearance could be*

Across the programme feedback relating to athletes' perceptions of 'traditional' volunteer appearances raised questions as to whether the nature of what an appearance could be reimagined. In March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic put in-person appearances on hold as the country went into lockdown, whilst the subsequent postponement of the Tokyo Olympic Games and Paralympic Games suddenly changed the dynamic where, from expecting athletes to be limiting any volunteering appearance commitments, they had more time on their hands. The AI delivery team were proactive to respond to this change in circumstances which led to a need to consider a different remote based format for appearances. The deployment approach for the final 9 months of AIP therefore looked at:

- Maintaining existing AIP deployment matched relationships where possible, exploring where virtual appearance opportunities might exist.
- Where existing AIP deployment relationships weren't feasible or weren't yet in place, to work with individual athletes to explore local network/links for virtual opportunities (centred around their interests and passions).

The example of Sarah Hope is an excellent illustration of what quality and impactful remote appearances can look like, whilst centred around the athlete's interests and passions. As identified Sarah is an athlete who specifically identified that she had a preference for doing virtual appearances. As the deployment host at Midlands Psychology explained:

*'I guess my ambition at the beginning was 'would you write something to inspire the families', but then we thought we could do more with this. Her [Sarah's] wish to be involved and to help us came shining through. I wanted Sarah to be happy and be engaged and to have ownership of this, but know that*

*she's part of our team, that she's not an outsider.'* (Deployment Host, Midlands Psychology, Keep Achieving Programme, Interview September 2020).

After some initial newsletter contributions Sarah found other ways to engage with the families, using her own social media profile to synergise her efforts for the newsletter. She continued:

*'I said I'm probably happier writing, but I have been doing a few bits where I'm speaking to camera. I have created a video for one of the issues, where I demonstrated some of the challenges and put that on my YouTube channel, so people could click from the newsletter and see two minutes of me dribbling the basketball. So, I said I'd be willing to film a few bits, make it a bit more interactive, and [the deployment host] was all for it. He was just grateful for anything that I was willing to do.'* (Sarah Hope, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview September 2020).

Importantly, Sarah was able to draw upon her lived experience of autism within her newsletter contributions to share ideas, experiences and common issues related to autism. She also became a valued member of the Keep Achieving team, inputting regularly in planning meetings.

This example clearly goes way beyond the way that many athletes, and those working within high performance sport, view an athlete volunteering appearance. However, it also presents an opportunity to consider different, flexible ways to engage beneficiaries that work around athletes training and competition commitments, and match to their preferences in terms of the nature of appearances they might undertake.

### *Further opportunities*

Sarah Hope's deployment relationship with Midlands Psychology 'Keep Achieving' programme is noteworthy because it originated via a national link within Sport England, as a funded National Lottery initiative. There are two important points in relation to this process. First, the deployment host reflected on the 'chance link' that generated the connection to AIP (and Sarah Hope) and how a more strategic approach to promoting AIP might be a valuable consideration in the future. The deployment host suggested:

*'As a general comment from a grassroots and non-traditional sports programme perspective, it [the connection with Sarah] was a chance link; an idea by me and by Naomi into somebody at Sport England. My overall comment would be that we don't leverage our assets to the extent that we could. We're talking about investment in a project to deliver the outcomes of the investing organisation but I'm not sure there is the cultural orientation towards the idea that the investor has a role in looking at its investments to make those connections. Because if it wasn't for having a crazy idea to have someone work with us, then I don't think [we would have had the success we did with Sarah]. I don't know the extent to which AIP promotes itself, but I think there is a promotion role in there for all kinds of projects. AIP would have never heard of me, we would never have heard of AIP, but we were so inspired. Everybody's got to be promoting themselves to one another and that would really have helped us. But I'm so glad we found our way to AIP, and to Sarah, and to Steve Flynn, and to Alison Williams, who have been a joy and delight and a pleasure to work with.'* (Deployment Host, Midlands Psychology, Interview September 2020).

Second, and relatedly, Steve Flynn saw the example created in this case as a lesson for being more strategic in working with Sport England (and the National Lottery more broadly) to create synergistic opportunities that AIP could tap into and add value to these programmes. Steve reflected:

*'It's something I've been looking at is to be a bit more joined up with what Sport England or National Lottery are already funding. And as a programme, I think that's an opportunity for us to be smarter, more aware of where there's already Lottery or Government investment and where we can connect to that and offer more value. You know, if there's already a Sport England or Lottery programme in place to support autism, or mental health, or women in sport - as we know there are - then that will help to square the circle.'* (Steve Flynn, RF for Manchester and Sheffield, October 2020)

Part of the rationale is the ability to scale a deployment intervention nationwide but based on a varied network of opportunities at a local level. Such a model should not change the athlete centred principle so would only get activated once athlete interests and passions were identified.

Some caution is required in understanding how such a model might work. When reflecting on such opportunities Sport England noted some of the tensions in the deployment model in earlier years of AIP where trust can be eroded with national deployment partners if you can't realise the deployment opportunities.

However, it is evident from the learnings in DY3 that there is further scope to reimagine what appearances can be with virtual opportunities, and also to consider strategic opportunities via organisations like the National Lottery.

#### **Future Considerations (Deployment)**

FC9: The learnings from the AIP DY3 **deployment approach** identify some **key principles** that should feature within any future approaches to AVAs:

- Start with the athletes interests and passions in mind
- Create the capacity to find the right deployment matches (the deployment brokerage function)
- Aim to work on a repeat appearance model
- Explore the potential to create ongoing/sustained relationships between athlete and deployment host organisations.

FC10: With an understanding of the realism of being able to invest in another AIP programme at scale, there are three potential future models of deployment that could be considered (not mutually exclusive). These should be based around the core principles of the AIP DY3 deployment model (identified above):

1. A sport led model whereby individual sports develop an approach that works for them, recognising this would need to look very different for a smaller, centralised sport as it might be a sport where athletes are based across the country.
2. A geography-based model whereby sports are clustered together to pool the deployment brokerage (RF) function, as in the case of AIP.

3. Working with the National Lottery nationally to create a pipeline of deployment opportunities from which the deployment brokerage function would follow up locally to explore possibilities (in line with athletes interests and passions). This model would need further testing but has the potential to create a high value win-win model that showcases the investments of the National Lottery.

FC11: Based on the learnings from individual sport's approaches to AVAs and from similar work in professional sport, there is the opportunity to explore buddying more than one athlete to a deployment partner helping to **facilitate peer-to-peer learning between athletes**. This model is likely to be more suited to a sport led approach whereby there are existing relationships between athletes.

### 3.9 Communications

#### *Summary of key learning points*

51. The need for a communications plan to support appearances, that covers national stakeholders (UK Sport, Sport England), guidance for NGBs, support for athletes, and guidance for deployment hosts.

Feedback from various sources identified a possible missing piece of the AIP model, that of communications. Raising the profile of AIP was seen as an important means of generating further support from athletes, sports and the wider high performance sporting system. There was no communications resource dedicated to the programme and at no point was there a formal launch with stakeholders or public announcement of AIP. Put simply awareness was low. There are a number of dimensions to this:

- **At a client level**, there has been no public communication from UK Sport or Sport England about the programme:

*'There clearly hasn't been anywhere along the line, enough messaging out from UK Sport, whose client group the sports are, around the need to engage with this, the strengths of it, how's it going, there's been absolute absence of any meaningful communication. And I think that's been to the detriment of the programme and the success of the programme.'* (Athletes Inspire interview, September 2020)

- **At an NGB level** there is an opportunity to generate positive profile, and also to use the successes to help influence other non-AIP athletes in terms of their approach to appearances:

*'I cite the example of boxing coming back to me and saying, 'well, we've got a couple of athletes who are interested in doing this on the back of what they've seen with Niall.' You know, and you don't know where you don't know, really, you know, and at the outset, you know, in some cases, we struggled to get athletes to buy into the idea of doing AIP because they didn't see value in it. And it's only when you start sharing those successes, that people realised 'well, I'd like to do something like that.'* (Steve Flynn, RF Manchester and Sheffield, Interview, October 2020)

- **At an athlete level**, help them to promote their work. Important for reaching a wider audience but also in terms of building their personal brand.
- **At a deployment host level**, if there is no guidance to connect the appearance as part of a broader programme then the ability outside of their immediate audience is limited. Additionally, this is a missed opportunity for sports or UK Sport to be able to further amplify the good news stories.

***Future Considerations (Communications)***

FC15: There is an opportunity to **better promote the value and impact of AVAs**. UK Sport (and Sport England) should consider developing a communications plan to support AVAs. This includes their own communication and promotion of AVAs, as well as guidance for NGBs, support that could be offered for athletes' promotion of their appearances, as well as offering guidance for deployment hosts.

## 4. IMPACT OF AIP

### 4.1 Impact on Beneficiaries

Evidence indicates that **AIP appearances garnered a breadth of positive impacts for the intended beneficiaries of athlete engagements**, and these cover a number of the Government Outcomes for sport.

Impact on beneficiaries was found in various forms, ranging from immediate impacts on groups of people who attended athlete deployments, to more individualised impacts where the influence was more gradual or incremental. In some cases, the impact of athlete appearances was definitive and directly measurable, however, there was also examples of where the impact was less tangible, more indirect and difficult to quantify, yet was clearly no less impactful on beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the transfer of appearances to virtual environments as a necessity of the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, enabled athletes to impact on beneficiaries via alternative (on-line) means and channels. Engagement with the athletes' wider network and public through social media platforms was particularly evident during lockdown periods in multiple forms (podcast, video, webinar etc.) across all sports and regions on the programme. However, this is also challenging to analyse without inside access to the individual athletes' social media accounts to determine reach and impressions.

Quantitative insights into the impact of AIP on beneficiaries was obtained via a survey, which was completed by the recipients of AIP appearances. Across all deployment years, 105 beneficiaries completed the survey<sup>17</sup> across a number of different appearances (71 Male; 28 Female; 6 Unspecified) yielding data on how the athlete appearance had engaged and inspired the survey respondent. In relation to how beneficiaries rated the athlete appearance (based on a 5-point Likert scale: Fantastic, Really good, Okay, Not very good, Awful), **81% of respondents (n=75) rated the appearance as 'Fantastic' or 'Really good'**. Importantly, only 1% of respondents rated the appearance as 'Not very good' and no respondents described the appearance as 'Awful'. These overwhelmingly positive findings were reinforced with 86% of respondents indicating that they would like to attend another athlete appearance in the future (Maybe 14%, and No 0%), with 59% specifying that they would like the same athlete to visit again (Maybe 27%, No 13%).

One of the key metrics attributed to athlete appearances was to understand the extent to which the beneficiaries were inspired. The beneficiary surveys tracked the extent to which beneficiaries were **inspired by** the appearance and the extent to which beneficiaries were **inspired to** engage in action as a result of the appearance. Inspiration towards action was rated in relation to an action targeted by the deployment host and an action chosen by the beneficiary, as indicated using an open-ended question. Responses from the beneficiary surveys indicated how athlete appearances were able to act as a form of inspiration to beneficiaries (see Table 5.1) with mean scores ranging from 5.37 – 5.67 (out of 7) for the aspects of the survey related to inspiration. Notably, this highlights **that inspiration to engage in the actions targeted by the deployment host was the strongest scoring factor** and illustrates that **athletes have been effective at delivering the deployment hosts key message**.

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that not all questions within the survey were completed by every respondent.

Table 4.1: Beneficiary survey responses: Inspiration of athlete appearance

Inspiration metric	Number of responses	Mean response (7-Point Likert Scale)
I experienced inspiration during visit	104	5.56
I felt inspired during the athlete visit	103	5.50
Something about the athlete visit inspired me	104	5.48
I am inspired to [targeted outcome as identified by the deployment host]	103	5.67
I am inspired to do something else [personal outcome]	71	5.37

In terms of qualitative responses to evidence the impact of an athlete appearance on a group of beneficiaries, the case of **Ben Watson**, a Paralympic track cyclist (C3) based in Manchester, was among the best examples. The AIP appearances that Ben undertook in DY3 were conducted with the EY Foundation, an independent charity born out of Ernst & Young, that works with disadvantaged young people, employers and social entrepreneurs to realise their career ambitions and transition into work, higher education or self-employment. Feedback indicated that Ben’s appearances had inspired young people to work towards targeted action identified by the EY Foundation, but also to work towards actions and objectives that the beneficiaries had chosen themselves. Feedback from the deployment host outlined where Ben’s appearances had impacted directly on the young people engaged by the EY Foundation. Staff spoke of his “authentic approach” and “relatable messages” as critical to inspiring change within young people. As the deployment host indicated:

*‘His [Ben’s] challenges in life were at a similar stage in life to the young people, an age they can relate to. Seeing somebody who came out of those struggles in a positive way is very beneficial. Ben’s honesty highlighting the ‘difficult patch’ is important. They [the beneficiaries] need to understand they will face challenges along the way.’* (Deployment Host, EY Foundation, Interview, February 2020).

Staff at EY Foundation also noted factors to highlight where Ben’s appearances offered value for the beneficiaries:

*‘The young people were impressed by Ben’s status. He was a bit of a celebrity to them and it was good for them see how normal he is ... and speaks to them on a level ... The sessions are delivered in a corporate environment which can be an intimidating space for the young people in its own right. Ben’s message helped reinforce to them that everything is in reach for them ... meeting somebody else who has been successful in a different area [sport rather than business] is good for the young people to see.’* (Deployment Host, EY Foundation, Interview, February 2020).

Quantitative data, in the form of the beneficiary surveys that were completed specifically in relation to Ben’s appearances, revealed how they were inspirational for the beneficiaries in attendance. Responses from 56 young people (see Table 4.2) further highlighted the positive impact that these appearances had on them, particularly with regards to **inspiring the young people to reach their potential** (the targeted outcome for the deployment host).



Table 4.2: Responses from Beneficiary Survey completed by attendees of EY Foundation workshop

	Strongly disagree		Neutral			Strongly agree	
<i>I experienced inspiration during the athlete visit</i>	1	2	3	4	5 (5.29)	6	7
<i>I felt inspired during the athlete visit</i>	1	2	3	4	5 (5.15)	6	7
<i>Something about the athlete visit inspired me</i>	1	2	3	4	5 (5.25)	6	7
<i>I am inspired to reach my potential</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6 (5.76)	7
<i>I am inspired to do something else...</i>	1	2	3	4	5 (5.30)	6	7

A further example of beneficiary impact was evident in the work that **Niall Farrell** [GB Boxing] undertook through a series of appearances at a state school in Sheffield with specialisms in Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH). In this case, the impact was at an individual level, with Niall acting as a role model for young people at the school. Evidence revealed how Niall's willingness to engage with young people on an individual basis and take a personal interest in their progress during a series of appearances enabled certain individuals to be impacted positively. Reflecting on a conversation with a pupil who was reluctant to undertake work experience, Niall outlined one example of **individualised beneficiary impact**. In this interaction, a teacher had explained to Niall that the pupil concerned wasn't confident enough to explore new opportunities. Niall used his repeat appearances at the school to gain the trust of the pupil and recalled how the conversation developed:

*'I said to him "well, the hardest thing about going anywhere and doing these things is the first time you're sitting there in a new place". I said, "Don't you think I was nervous coming to you, like I've never met you before, you're at a new school, I'm not even from Sheffield" and he said, "Well that's true actually". And then I said to him "Do me a favour, just go there and try your best, and if it doesn't work out, at least you can put your hand on your heart and say, "I tried my best there". And then at the end of the session I said to him again "Just give it a go, just give it a go", and he said "Oh, I might, I might" and I thought 'I'll probably see him next week', 'coz I thought I don't think he'll probably do it. But then, I come the next week and he wasn't there, and I spoke to the teacher and he said "Yeah, he's gone to work experience and he's really enjoying it.'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, Interview March 2020).

The potential long-term impact of this seemingly modest behaviour change in a young person could be significant, especially in an education context. Niall continued:

*'... a few of the other lads who didn't have work experience 'coz they were too young, it felt like I got into a few them as well, they just spoke to me about their mates, they're into all kinds of bad stuff. I said to them "Listen, they'll do nothing, just keep doing what they're doing, probably get put in prison – that's not the life for you, you've got a lot more to give than that'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, Interview March 2020).

As such, the **'ripple effect' or 'multiplier effect'** of changing the behaviour of a small group of pupils could permeate through to the others, which demonstrates the potential of AIP to address multiple government outcomes [individual development; economic development; community development]. Therefore, it is important to note that changing the behaviour of one person in this context has the potential to influence multiple 'others' in the same community.

A further point that the previous example conveys is that **the impact of athlete appearances on beneficiaries may be less immediate, indirect, or difficult to measure tangibly**. Several deployment hosts outlined the challenges of measuring the impact of appearances on beneficiaries, highlighting that any positive effects may take time to embed, in particular with young beneficiaries. This view was shared in the testimonies of several athletes. For example, **Megan Giglia**, a British Paralympic track cyclist competing in C3 classification events, highlighted some of these challenges when reflecting on her experiences with *Me, Myself and I*, a project offering support to Looked After Children within the Stockport area. However, and in similarity to Niall Farrell, Megan emphasised how repeat appearances with the same deployment host addressed some of these challenges and paved the way for a longer-term impact on beneficiaries. Megan explained:

*'I think that one visit, yes it does make an impact at that moment, but it is very easily forgotten. Whereas if you can build a relationship and you can build a rapport, you have a higher chance of success in actually making a difference ... Some [young people] are very outgoing and very talkative and others are quite quiet and would be reserved and rather sit at the back and just watch. Some will take it away and act on it directly ... and some of them will pull on it in the future.'* (Megan Giglia, Para Cyclist Interview, February 2019)

Qualitative data from beneficiaries highlighted how they been inspired as a consequence of the athlete visits, for example:

*'... she brought her gold medals to show the children...she let them hold them, put them on, let them see the mascots...and for a young person—especially that cohort—to actually touch a gold medal is phenomenal. And it inspired the young people so much. I mean, one of our young women went back into her primary school and did a whole project on Megan.'* (Interview; Deployment Host - Me, Myself and I February 2019)

The connection that Megan established with the young people was also found to support the young people's inspiration to overcome barriers and raise aspirations, which was the ultimate outcome that *Me, Myself and I* was trying to help achieve:

*'...she told her story and all the young people around that table could relate to it because of her experiences...You could see people saying, if you can overcome all of those barriers, then I can as well...and I had never thought about that before'* (Interview; Deployment Host – Me, Myself and I, February 2019)

Arguably, the most powerful example of how beneficiary impact may be less immediate, indirect, or difficult to quantify was provided in the case study of **Jude Hamer** [GB Wheelchair Basketball]. Jude's appearances were conducted with Steps, a charity that works with individuals whose lives are affected by serious lower limb conditions in childhood. Having been born with Proximal Focal Femoral Deficiency [PFFD], the initial intention of Jude's appearances was to act as a role model for young

people with PFFD (and other lower limb conditions) and share her lived experience to help inform the medical and care decisions of young people and their families. Despite the nationwide lockdown in early 2020, the relationship between deployment host and athlete continued to be evident across both the organisations and Jude's social media platforms with multiple posts containing appearance type content posted. Interview data from the Managing Director of Steps highlighted the difficulties of measuring the impact of Jude's appearances and observed that a reliance on quantitative indicators of impact were frequently inappropriate and often concealed more important insights. This was encapsulated most poignantly in reflections upon how Jude's video contributions [see [here](#)] might assist parents in making decisions concerning treatment options for their children or even, in the most extreme cases of PFFD, contemplating the decision to terminate a pregnancy. The Managing Director of Steps revealed:

*'For our beneficiaries and the parents that we support it's [Jude's video] extremely helpful because her story is one we can share with a lot of parents. When they have the ante-natal [scans at 20 weeks], it's difficult to choose for your child, especially if it's a decision that will impact them for the rest of their life. Not only that, but at the ante-natal diagnosis at the 20-week scan, you also get the option to have a termination, and that's where, for us, stories like Jude's for parents to look at her video, to understand a little bit about what it entails, and understanding that there's a success story out of it is really important. It's difficult for us to ascertain or come out with an indicator of impact, but when we talk to parents following their 20-week scan, we honestly don't know, we're assuming yes, [we do] have an impact that it's a positive to carry on with the pregnancy.'* (Deployment Host, Steps, Interview September 2020).

Continuing this theme, the deployment host also outlined how Jude's appearances were fundamental to presenting a positive and inspiring story to young people affected by PFFD or other lower-limb conditions and provided some salient advice in respect of measuring the impact of charitable work, not least that undertaken by elite athletes in programmes such as AIP. The deployment host continued:

*'Because of the nature of our charity and the support we provide, and how we provide it, how many people have watched the video and have decided not to have a termination - it's impossible to capture that ... but that's true impact that cannot be quantified. You know, the number of people, children, teenagers who are struggling with leg-lengthening and decide I'm going to have an amputation to make their life better. We hear about it but people need to understand that you shouldn't just focus on numbers, otherwise we're just accountants, right?'* (Deployment Host, Steps, Interview September 2020).

## 4.2 Impact on Deployment Hosts

Insight from deployment hosts (DHs) was predominantly obtained via a survey which was completed by DHs to provide a macro perspective on the impact of athlete appearances on beneficiaries. Overall, 28 DH surveys were completed in DY2 and DY3, yielding data on the visits of 32 different athletes in 27 different organisations. Five of the DH surveys completed were for multiple athletes undertaking a single, logged appearance. The overall DH data indicates:

- Across the 28 DH survey logs, the breakdown of targeted Government outcomes was as follows:

- 23 (82%) Individual development
- 14 (50%) Mental well-being
- 13 (46%) Social and community development
- 13 (46%) Physical well-being.

It is both interesting and important to note that none of the deployment hosts identified that the appearances would contribute towards the Government outcome of 'economic development'. It should be articulated that although not explicitly identified as a targeted outcome by any DH, that by enhancing the four other Government outcomes in an individual or group, that this will indirectly benefit 'economic development' in the local and national contexts.

- Across the 28 DH survey logs, the breakdown of the setting where the appearance was conducted was:
  - 11 (39%) School
  - 7 (25%) Other (FE college, civic offices, youth group)
  - 4 (14%) Sports
  - 3 (11%) Event
  - 2 (7%) Charity
  - 1 (4%) Club
  
- Across the 28 DH survey logs, the breakdown of audience type was:
  - 18 (64%) Youth (under 18 years)
  - 5 (18%) Working age adults
  - 3 (11%) Other (mixture of participants)
  - 1 (4%) People with physical disabilities
  - 1 (4%) People who access mental health services

Predominantly the most common audience type was those under 18 years of age. It should be highlighted that within this homogenous category, there are young people from harder to reach groups (children in foster care, vulnerable children, children with low educational attainment, children from low social economic backgrounds etc.). It is important to note that there were no visits identified by the deployment hosts which specifically targeted the elderly, male or female only groups, BAME groups, people with intellectual disabilities or disaffected / disengaged people.

In terms of the activities that the athletes engaged in during the appearance, both public speaking (75%) and question and answer session (75%) were the main activities identified. 32% of appearances included an element of practical sport-based activities (e.g., games). 7% of activities included practical non sport-based activity (e.g., homework club) or 7% opening a facility. 25% of deployment hosts identified 'other' for an activity undertaken by the athlete, this included presenting medals, supporting sporting activities and autograph signing.

Interestingly, 71% of the athlete appearances were part of a formal programme offered by the deployment host. There were multiple programmes which benefitted from athlete appearances, for example:

- Sport courses run at colleges (including BTEC Level 2 & 3, HNCs, GCSEs)
- Bristol Active Life Project (BALP)
- Active Row Programme
- The School Games
- Beat the Street
- The Daily Mile
- Children's Mental Health Week 2019
- Active Communities Network Diversionary Activity Programme
- EY Foundation Smart Futures Programme
- AITC Talented Bursary Programme

There were multiple reasons why a deployment host wanted to host an athlete. Analysing these responses highlights 11 key reasons:

- **Inspire** and **motivate** the beneficiaries in all aspects of their life (e.g., sport, education)
- Provide a **role model** for the beneficiaries
- Develop **awareness** in the positive benefits of physical activity and mental health
- Attract **media attention** and **publicity** for the deployment host
- To highlight **equality, inclusivity** and **diversity** of an event or programme
- To emphasise to beneficiaries the importance of **hard work** and **resilience**
- To provide the beneficiaries with a different **participatory** experience (e.g., wheelchair basketball)
- Develop **understanding** amongst the beneficiaries about disability
- Adding **value** to a programme
- It was a **free** resource offered to the deployment host
- It had been requested by **parents**

It is important to note that although 100% of deployment hosts indicated that the athlete contributed positively towards the targeted outcomes of the appearance, only 36% indicated that they had any evidence to support this claim.

As previously highlighted, **100% of deployment hosts were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the appearance** (with 84% 'very satisfied' with the athlete appearance). 100% of the deployment hosts indicated that the athlete followed the brief provided to them, and highlighted the following key reasons for indicating this:

- Athlete was **easy to work with** for both the deployment host and beneficiaries (e.g., friendly, personable, approachable, engaging, honest, empowering)
- Athletes were **professional** (e.g., on time, reliable, professionally presented, good temperament)
- Doing **exactly what was asked of them** and in many cases **much more** (e.g., staying longer than expected, baking cakes)
- Delivered and adapted material appropriate to the **audience**

In relation to the factors which contribute towards a quality athlete appearance, 89% of deployment hosts indicated that the athlete understood the role they were being asked to undertake. 89% indicated that the athlete was able to share their story effectively and 89% agreed that the athlete was

able to tailor their message to the audience. 89% of the deployment hosts also indicated that the athlete appeared to be motivated and engaged. It is important that all athletes undertaking an appearance understand the role they are being asked to undertake, be able to share their story effectively, be able to tailor their message to the audience and appear to be motivated and engaged.

In terms of additional factors—to those identified previously—which contribute to a quality appearance, the deployment hosts emphasised:

- **Authenticity** and wanting to be involved<sup>18</sup>
- Beneficiaries able to **relate** to the athlete
- Highly **motivated** to contribute
- **Clear purpose** and **link** between athlete and programme

The deployment hosts were also asked to indicate how the athlete appearance could have been improved. 57% of these responses were that the visit could not have been improved and that the athlete, activities and outcomes were as strong as it could possibly have been. Additionally, deployment hosts indicated that:

- **Session** could have been **more focused around the athlete** to maximise their input and impact
- DH could have attracted a **larger audience** so more people could have benefitted from the visit
- **Making the visit longer.**

**100% of deployment hosts indicated that they would host a high-performance athlete again.** Multiple reasons were given by the deployment hosts, but the key themes were [emphasis added]:

- Grass roots sport needs athletes to help **children's dreams**
- Highly **motivational** for beneficiaries
- Great way to **inspire** people
- **Unique dimension** added to programme delivery
- Helps to have an athlete **positively reinforce messages**
- **Showcases** to young people what can be achieved
- **Positive role models** for the beneficiaries
- Beneficiaries **enjoyed** the session
- **Unique experience** for the young people on the programme
- **Easy to manage**
- **Adds value** to what is being offered.

In relation to the qualitative findings, there was **limited evidence to explain how athlete appearances directly impacted on deployment hosts, with most respondents preferring to outline how athlete appearances had impacted on their specific beneficiaries rather than on their organisations per se.** Nevertheless, alongside some indications as to how athlete appearances may benefit deployment hosts, salient messages were presented from deployment hosts

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<sup>18</sup> This resonates with similar research conducted with male and female professional footballers that the M&E team are aware of.

regarding the factors that may influence authentic and meaningful athlete engagements and subsequently, enable athlete appearances to have greater impact.

In terms of **impact on host organisations**, various athlete case studies highlighted the influence that their appearances had provided. One such example came from **Neil Fachie**, a visually impaired British Paralympic track cyclist, based in Manchester. Neil's DY3 appearances were undertaken at a Manchester-based Law Firm, which specialised in international commercial law and had offices across the UK, mainland Europe, and Asia. Neil's appearances were conducted with the same beneficiary group – the corporate team at the Law Firm – and focussed on a series of topics that were relatable to and transferable between the performance sport and corporate contexts. Feedback from the deployment host indicated that the sessions were “*inspiring and thought provoking*” and that, as a result, the corporate team had been inspired to improve their performance at work. However, more specifically, there was an indication that the appearances had helped to inspire staff to think differently and more strategically within the workplace and also encouraged them to work closer together through a collectively agreed outcome to debrief more thoroughly as part of their work practice.

A further example of how an athlete appearance had impacted on the deployment host was provided in the case of **Sarah Hope** [GB Wheelchair Basketball]. As a result of her contributions to a newsletter published by Midlands Psychology in relation to their *Keep Achieving* programme, the deployment host noted how Sarah's insights into managing a high-performance sport career whilst being high-functioning autistic had not only had a positive impact on the families associated with *Keep Achieving* but had also enabled Midlands Psychology to broaden the circulation of the newsletter and increase their organisational network. As the contact at *Keep Achieving* explained:

*'I would say our readership has gone up directly, and also we've reached a different readership. We've also been able to reach out to Basketball England and other elite basketball players. We've also expanded our circulation to fourteen other organisations that support autism, so we've also had excellent feedback from them.'* (Deployment Host, Midlands Psychology, Interview September 2020).

Of these, the most important factor identified by deployment hosts was the need for athletes to be authentic in their appearances (see Section 3.5), which potentially could be aided if there was overlap between the athlete's lived experience and the aims of the charity (see Section 3.8). Data from the charity Steps reinforced these factors, with the deployment host commenting on their delight to 'welcome back' **Jude Hamer** (Wheelchair Basketball) as an ambassador for the charity, several years after they had supported Jude and her family. The deployment host at Steps reflected:

*'From a charity point of view ... because her parents were helped by Steps it means a lot that twenty years later she comes back to us. There is a greater impact for us that we see the children and the parents that we've helped, that they want to come back and help is a greater achievement ... that they recognise the importance of our charity, that they want to contribute and help other children and other people with lower limb conditions'* (Deployment Host, Steps, Interview September 2020).

Therefore, while direct evidence of how athletes have impacted on deployment organisations was limited, deployment hosts were still able to identify salient factors that may enable impactful appearances.

### 4.3 Impact on Athletes

**Athletes who had conducted appearances during DY3 highlighted numerous benefits that they had obtained as a result of their engagement in AIP.** Several indicated that their **confidence had improved**, not only in relation to their ability to engage with new or large groups of people, but also in relation to their ability to make a contribution to society that was beyond their sporting exploits. Athletes also commented on how their **AIP appearances had offered valuable and relevant experience towards their post-sport career plans as well as enabling them to acquire or develop a range of transferable skills**, such as planning, communication, organisational skills, adaptability, time management, and emotional and social skills. Other benefits that athletes perceived they had received included the opportunity to meet people that they otherwise would not have engaged with, and **some athletes disclosed a positive impact on their sporting performance.** Although difficult to evidence causal links between AIP activity and an improvement in sporting performances, **no athlete indicated that engagement with AIP had any detrimental impacts on their sporting performance.**

The case study of **Niall Farrell** [GB Boxing] was perhaps most indicative of the impact that AIP could have on athletes. Following his appearances at a specialist Social, Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) school located in Sheffield, AIP staff and those associated with Niall's development as an athlete observed noticeable differences as a result of his engagement with the school. James Hooper, the Performance Lifestyle Advisor for GB Boxing reflected on Niall:

*'... he just seems a little bit more mature, a little bit more focused, he's got a bit more of a broader understanding of what it takes to be this elite athlete and then this potentially elite pro boxer. He understands that building his network is crucial to him having a good pro career.'* (James Hooper, PLA Boxing, Interview March 2020)

James also noted how contributing to AIP had provided Niall with an alternative pathway to follow during a lengthy injury break during which he was unable to train:

*'I think what the AIP programme has done is that it's given a little bit of ... something else to put his focus on rather than getting bogged down in the fact that he can't train ... it's given him something else to throw his attention on to.'* (James Hooper, PLA Boxing, Interview March 2020)

Niall's reflections on his own development reinforced the benefits that others had observed. In trying to summarise the benefits that he has received as a result of his appearances at the school, Niall expressed a sense of pride in being able to assist young people towards more positive life aspirations. He explained:

*'I felt like I've done ... my bit to help a kid try and better his life. So, it is very rewarding. It can be challenging, because not all kids want to want to do better, do you know what I mean, but I think when it when it does pay off, it feels good. It does feel good.'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, Interview March 2020)

Continuing this theme, Niall outline the personal benefits that he had accrued, most notably through the self-confidence that he had acquired through his appearances. He continued:



*'I wouldn't think it's impacted my boxing, but things to do with the boxing ... So, I think it's helped me out overall, how to advise kids and make them feel comfortable ... I think it's gained me loads of confidence. I like believe I can go into a load of schools now and share my story and adapt it to the audience. And overall, it's made me a better person. And I think that's the, that's the big thing I've got out of all of it. I like feel like a better person.'* (Niall Farrell, Boxer, Interview March 2020)

Similar sentiments were revealed in relation to **Kayla Bell** [GB Wheelchair Basketball] following her appearances with Place2Be, a children's mental health charity. There was unanimous agreement that Kayla's confidence had increased as a result of her appearances, which was paying dividends in many aspects of life, both on the basketball court and away from sport. Andy Barrow (AAL, Sheffield) summarised the thoughts of all interviewees by mentioning:

*'What's been good about Kayla is that we've watched her confidence grow. She'd always said she found the whole appearance process quite daunting. We'd send her off on an appearance with somebody and she was very much – not passive – but she was just chiming in when she felt comfortable. But she's become more and more comfortable and building up her skills and I've been really pleased with how she's been going.'* (Andy Barrow, AAL Sheffield, Interview July 2020)

Kayla also reflected on the growing sense of confidence that her appearances at Place2Be had realised and that as a result of the experience, she felt a greater sense of autonomy in connecting with potential deployment hosts. She explained:

*'Yeah, I guess I'm a lot more confident arranging phone calls and just going out and putting my face out there. I'd always been one to hide in the background when now I'm like 'yeah, I can do this, yeah, this is nerve-wracking but you've got to do it anyway, just got to get it done'. I think that's helped me the most ... I can now go out and arrange appearances now, which is quite cool.'* (Kayla Bell, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview June 2020)

Kayla's case study also revealed a positive impact on her sporting performance, in particular in contributing more to team meetings.

*'I would say that it's probably helped my sporting aspect because I'm so nervous when it comes to speaking to anyone and I struggle in groups, so like even with my team-mates I'm probably not one to put my hand up ever, to gaining that little bit of confidence, it probably doesn't seem a lot, but after [my appearances] I was helping out [contributing] quite a lot [in team situations].'* (Kayla Bell, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview, June 2020)

This impact was validated by Jayne Ellis [Performance Director, Wheelchair Basketball]. Jayne noted how Kayla was typically reserved in team meetings or reticent to engage in "difficult conversations" regarding performance. However, that had appeared to change since engagement with AIP, and that Kayla was more willing to share her opinion or challenge others within the squad, which Jayne mentioned was a critical factor in "driving the team forwards". Jayne continued:

*'What we've seen through [AIP] is that in one-to-ones with her coaches and within the team, her improving confidence to chat within those spaces and hold players to account, in the lovely way that Kayla does, has been really beneficial.'* (Jayne Ellis, Performance Director, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview September 2020)

Other positive impacts on athletes that cohered around an enhanced sense of confidence related to examples of where engagement with **AIP had helped to develop a stronger sense of identity**, which again had noticeable benefits both within and outside of the high-performance sport environment. To exemplify, in the case of **Sarah Hope** [GB Wheelchair Basketball], respondents observed clear differences in Sarah as a result of her AIP appearances, most poignantly in managing her own identity as an athlete and as a high-functioning autistic person. Jayne Ellis [Performance Director, Wheelchair Basketball] detailed these observations:

*'Her confidence has grown in acceptance of who she is and the challenges that she has [around] Asperger's. When she started this [AIP], she was very closed and very clear to [the Regional Facilitator] that she wasn't being the 'poster girl' for Asperger's, like not being the face of it ... But seeing where she's gone from, which was a very defensive position, with like 'I'm not going to be asked to do anything I'm not comfortable with' to then starting to dip her toe in a bit, then represented different organisations, then doing things with people online. And, all of a sudden, she has become a spokesperson, but she actually seems to be enjoying that. And what she's done is outstanding, she's a great role model and she's showing people that people can excel in everything that they do and find different ways to manage their Asperger's. She a brilliant example, and I think that's where we've seen her become more confident in believing in herself and putting that true story forward of all that she is.'* (Jayne Ellis, Performance Director, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview September 2020)

Further positive impacts on identity were shared by **Jude Hamer** [GB Wheelchair Basketball]. Interestingly, Jude explained how the opportunity to engage in an activity that had limited connection to basketball was both refreshing and impactful for her. She commented:

*'I guess it makes you feel like you're doing something worthwhile. I think being part of a team sport sometimes you can feel like you're lost in with everybody else, so you never really get to understand what impact you're having. So, to have an individual impact that's specific to my life experiences, that isn't about basketball, makes me feel like I'm making a difference and feel valued outside of sport. It isn't just about me being part of the team, it's about who I am and what I've done. And because they aren't massively interested in the sport side of it – that's just a nice add-on – it's just quite nice to talk about my experiences and to feel that they're valuable.'* (Jude Hamer, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview June 2020)

Finally, athletes remarked how **AIP appearances had assisted with their preparations to enable a smoother transition upon retirement from high-performance sport**. While not a direct objective of AIP, several athletes outlined how their experience of the programme provided an opportunity to consider their career trajectory following retirement from sport. To exemplify, **Kayla Bell** [Wheelchair Basketball] alluded to the benefits that her AIP appearances might have for her life after sport. While comparatively young in age, the importance of preparing for transition from elite sport was something that Kayla was acutely aware of and saw her AIP appearances as a foundation for these preparations. This was accentuated by the fact that Kayla saw her future career away from sport, which meant that creating connections outside of the sporting context was critical. She stated:

*'Knowing that I could just arrange stuff and build connections with different places, that will help me after sport. Obviously, sport is going to end one day and that is always the biggest fear that I would finish basketball and if I couldn't get employment, I'm not going to be able to do anything. So being able to know that I can still be connected to sport in a way that I can help; that I can go in and talk*

*about it to children and adults, that's made me feel more comfortable knowing that one day it will come to an end but I'll be better prepared.'* (Kayla Bell, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview, June 2020)

Along similar lines, GB Wheelchair Basketball team-mate, **Jude Hamer** explained how undertaking appearances had enabled her to contemplate how she could use her platform as an elite athlete to make further contributions to aspects of her life for which she had a similar interest and passion. Using her academic achievements as inspiration, Jude outlined her intentions to inspire women into careers associated with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Jude outlined:

*'I don't want to work in sport when I'm retired. My Masters is in Pharmacology, so I want to get back into that field. But I have a ten-year career gap where I've played basketball full-time, so that doesn't look great on a CV, even if you do fill it with sporting achievements. So, I'm starting to think about how do I get involved with charities that work with girls in STEM subjects. Maybe there's more sciencey-based people that I can work with and maybe they'll have connections that I can network through to find career options. It's helped me think more about just being an athlete and 'coz I don't want to work in sport I engage with it more now because it's not just about sport.'* (Jude Hamer, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview June 2020)

Interestingly how individuals used their platform as an elite athlete to make further contributions to passions outside that of their sport was still evident during the lockdown period. Seven of the forty-one athletes on AIP started new podcasts/YouTube channels during the first national lockdown. An additional two athletes started blogs available to the public. While it is difficult to evidence links between AIP and this increase in presence on social media, many attributed the decision to an increase in confidence, time and the desire to support others in the wider community. **Jack Hunter-Spivey** [Disability Table Tennis] was perhaps the best example of this whereby his desire to use his platform as an elite athlete to support the community through his weekly 'comedy-centred' podcast was announced on Facebook:

*"... We [Jack and his co-host] are trying to find the funny in everyday life and just put a smile on your face! During this time it is important to uplift each other and do what we can to keep communities together ..."*

Like Jude Hamer and Jack Hunter-Spivey, **Martin Perry** [Disability Table Tennis] used his social media platforms to engage with aspects external to his sporting discipline. Martin discussed wider social issues raising awareness for passions including religion, poverty, disability, gender and racial equality. As the host of the 'PerryPod', launched during lockdown, he discussed such topics with guests on his podcast, as announced on Twitter:

*"In episode 2 we find out more about [guest's twitter name]. We talk about religion, growing up in London, his journey to the Paralympic Games, BLM and what it means for him to be a young black role model. #PerryPOD"*

Where athletes have valued AIP and demonstrated a committed and ardent engagement to the deployment hosts, and this reflects their personal interests and passions, numerous positive impacts, which relate to both 'on and off-field performance' can be accrued.

#### 4.4 Wider impacts of AIP

While the main focus of the monitoring and evaluation was concerned with the impact of AIP on beneficiaries, deployment hosts, and the athletes themselves, the data indicated that additional or **wider benefits were accrued, not least in informing future policy and strategy**. For instance, representatives from Sport England noted how AIP, and in particular the revised delivery model of DY3, had provided a number of learnings that would inform strategic priorities and the direction of several national projects whether directly or indirectly related to athlete appearances. As one representative of Sport England observed:

*'I know, it's been tough ... you know, any sort of process where there's lots of change, and the delivery model has a significant shift, it's challenging. But I think, certainly in terms of where AIP has informed in terms of UK Sport strategy, actually, there's masses and masses of positives to take out of the learning, and the process that we've been through ... There's some great stories and some great impacts on young people, beneficiaries, athletes, as well, which is brilliant, but I think there's so much there to take forward into the future.'* (Sport England Interview, October 2020)

One such opportunity that was reported of where AIP could potentially impact on wider sport policy and strategy was in relation to the way in which NGBs could integrate their recreational and performance sport offerings as part of any future planning. More specifically, rather than treating recreational and performance sport as separate entities, through AIP there was evidence to support the potential for elite athletes to connect more tangibly with local communities and interest groups, and this was noted as an area that future NGB strategy could explore. The representative of Sport England continued:

*'I guess that's part of ... where we want to get to, and it feels like it's quite discrete at the moment in terms of this is the domain of performance and the domain of ... recreational participation. It will look different for every sport, but I'm thinking that the shift in priority will also maybe see a bit more spread to, across, you know, the participant participation side of the sport as well.'* (Sport England Interview, October 2020)

While not part of the original monitoring and evaluation project, the transfer of appearances to **virtual environments**, as a necessity of the various restrictions imposed by Government in relation to physical distancing and social proximity, was a defining characteristic of DY3 in comparison to previous delivery periods. This enabled athletes to impact on beneficiaries in a broader manner via alternative (on-line) means and channels that could not have been imagined at the start of AIP. Thirty-eight of the forty-one AIP athletes posted at least one post including content around appearances (see Table 4.3). While the content varied among individuals, sports and regions, the most common post considered as an appearance included video content in partnership with an organisation/deployment host or NGB. Examples of this are evident between Jude Hamer [Wheelchair Basketball] with Steps, Niall Farrell [Boxing] with MoveMore/GB Boxing, and Krysten Coombs [Para Badminton] with Sheffield Children's Hospital. An appearance post on average has received 469 views (video content), 78 likes, 4 comments and 2 shares for the lockdown period (23 March - 15 August 2020). It should also be noted that there is a positive correlation between basic post-engagement (likes, views, shares, comments) and the number of platforms the post appeared on. The use of social media and, specifically, the nature of an athlete appearance on these platforms, was a reoccurring theme identified by NGB leads across sports. However, there was a lack of clear recognition for these posts with many not being identified or

classified as appearances by the athlete themselves either through the use of formatting or language (e.g. partnership branding, sharing, use of hashtags identifying an appearance, introductions, etc.). This was similarly evident with AIP/Athletes Inspire terms not recognised or utilised in posts made by either the athlete or deployment partner. However, this may be attributed to the absence of guidance or clarity around the definition and characteristics of virtual appearances. The term was frequently used by AIP profiles when content was reshared.

*Table 4.3: Online Content from AIP Athletes posted during Covid-19 lockdown that could be considered as an Athlete Volunteer Appearance.*

Total Number of Athletes engaged during lockdown	40
Number of social media profiles	115
Number of profiles on Twitter	37 (32%)
Number of Profiles on Facebook	39 (34%)
Number of Profiles on Instagram	39 (34%)
Average number of followers per profile	1,375
Number of athletes posting one or more appearance post	38
Number of athletes starting a channel/vlog/podcast	7
Number athletes starting a blog	2

Engagement from followers and wider public networks is challenging to analyse in greater depth than likes, shares, comments and views without access to the individuals' account. This may be a key consideration when providing guidance on virtual appearances and the evidencing/documentation of such if reach and impressions metrics are included.

Athlete reflection on the transfer to virtual appearances was limited, however Sarah Hope [GB Wheelchair Basketball] provided insight into the potential benefits and impact of virtual appearances, to challenge the notion of what constitutes an athlete appearance and how they could be undertaken. Sarah explained:

*'... this idea of a virtual appearance, I never would have thought that I would have so many autistic Instagram followers because they don't talk about it and then suddenly they all come out of the woodwork because I've said it. So half of the people who've watched those videos it might not mean a whole lot to them, but because I've hit so many people at once, so many hundreds of people in one go, there's going to be a few people in there who it does matter to, so I think there is a future in virtual appearances, but I think quality over quantity perhaps.'* (Sarah Hope, Wheelchair Basketball, Interview, June 2020)

Clearly, the impact of Covid-19 restrictions has had an impact on athletes making appearances and the nature of those appearances, however, this has potentially enabled many to engage with wider audiences. In order to continue supporting for athletes who engage with online methods, further clarity on what constitutes an appearance in a digital age is required.

## 5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

As already acknowledged with AIP evolving into a developmental project, this has presented some rich learnings of the critical success factors in the process of delivering impactful volunteering appearances. As identified by Sport England (see 4.4) this provides an invaluable opportunity to inform future policy and practice for the effective delivery of AVAs across the high-performance sport landscape in the UK. Table 5.1 summaries the future considerations that were identified from the evidence presented throughout section 3, recognising that these future considerations will contribute towards multiple elements of the approach to AVAs.

Table 5.1: Summary of future considerations

Future Considerations	Contributing Towards						
	Delivery Model	Sport Engagement	Athlete Engagement	Training and Support	Roles	Deployment Approach	Comms.
<b>FC1:</b> Any future approaches to AVAs should <b>focus on establishing a set of principles that are informed by the AIP Delivery Year 3 model</b> , as opposed to the development of a more tightly prescribed model.	☑	☑					
<b>FC2:</b> An ‘athlete centred’ principle should be at the heart of any future AVA model. This should explicitly include basing deployment opportunities around athletes interests and passions. This helps to generate a more engaged and authentic approach which offers greater potential for beneficiary impact.	☑		☑			☑	
<b>FC3:</b> UK Sport have an important role to help champion and facilitate a whole system buy-in to the value of AVAs. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Re-framing the narrative around appearances in a positive way based on mutual opportunity and athlete benefits as well as social impact.</li> <li>- Explicitly embedding AVAs within UK Sport’s new strategy for the Paris cycle.</li> </ul>	☑	☑	☑				☑

Future Considerations	Contributing Towards						
	Delivery Model	Sport Engagement	Athlete Engagement	Training and Support	Roles	Deployment Approach	Comms.
- Making a concerted effort to work with sports at different levels to help them understand the value of AVAs particularly at a strategic level and within performance teams.							
<b>FC4: NGB engagement is critical.</b> Sports should be encouraged to consider how AVAs form part of their responsibilities relating to both delivering a social impact, and as part of an athlete's personal development. The launch event model for AVAs has merit and might be explored as part of a new focus on AVAs, potentially linked to athlete induction processes.	☑	☑	☑				☑
<b>FC5: An individualised model of training and support</b> has been shown to be the most effective and valued by athletes. Further consideration should be given to how such capacity and expertise can be created to build athletes confidence and skills to undertake effective appearances. This includes the potential development of a peer-to-peer model with more experienced athletes offering guidance and support to more junior athletes.			☑	☑	☑		
<b>FC6: The Regional Facilitator (RF) function is critical</b> to help find the right deployment opportunities and should be an integral <u>function</u> within any future approach.					☑	☑	
<b>FC7: Any future RF function</b> needs to understand the principles of <b>developing value-added deployment relationships</b> , i.e., a model based on relationships and repeat appearances that is aligned to athlete interests and creates a mutual win-win.			☑		☑	☑	
<b>FC8: The Performance Lifestyle Advisor role</b> is important in supporting AVAs and should be explicitly aligned to position the work around athlete personal development. However, capacity for this role is a risk factor and needs formalising.			☑	☑	☑		
<b>FC9: The learnings from the AIP DY3 deployment approach</b> identify some <b>key principles</b> that should feature within any future approaches to AVAs:	☑		☑		☑	☑	

Future Considerations	Contributing Towards						
	Delivery Model	Sport Engagement	Athlete Engagement	Training and Support	Roles	Deployment Approach	Comms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start with the athletes interests and passions in mind</li> <li>- Create the capacity to find the right deployment matches (the deployment brokerage function)</li> <li>- Aim to work on a repeat appearance model</li> <li>- Explore the potential to create ongoing/sustained relationships between athlete and deployment host organisations.</li> </ul>							
<p><b>FC10:</b> There are three <b>potential future models of deployment</b> that could be considered (not mutually exclusive), based around the core principles of the AIP DY3 deployment model (see FC9):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A sport led model whereby individual sports develop an approach that works for them.</li> <li>2. A geography-based model whereby sports are clustered together to pool the deployment brokerage (RF) function, as in the case of AIP.</li> <li>3. Working with the National Lottery nationally to create a pipeline of deployment opportunities from which the deployment brokerage function would follow up locally to explore possibilities (in line with athletes interests and passions).</li> </ol>	☑	☑				☑	
<p><b>FC11:</b> Based on the learnings from individual sport's approaches to AVAs and from similar work in professional sport, there is the opportunity to explore buddying more than one athlete to a deployment partner helping to <b>facilitate peer-to-peer learning between athletes.</b></p>			☑	☑		☑	
<p><b>FC12:</b> There is an opportunity to better promote the value and impact of AVAs. UK Sport (and Sport England) should consider developing a communications plan to support AVAs. This includes their own communication and promotion of AVAs, as well as guidance for NGBs, support that could be offered for athletes' promotion of their appearances, as well as offering guidance for deployment hosts.</p>	☑	☑	☑			☑	☑



## 6. APPENDICES

### Appendix 6.1 – Summary of Case Studies

Case Study	Summary of Findings
<p><b>Megan Giglia</b></p> <p><i>Megan is a British Paralympic track cyclist competing in C3 classification events. Megan won Gold medals in the Individual Pursuit and Time Trial events at the 2016 UCI Para-cycling Track World Championships and in the Individual Pursuit at the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games. This case study focuses on her deployment in DY2 with the 'Me, Myself and I' project for looked after children.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of the evidence highlights positive benefits of the appearances on beneficiaries, the host, and the athlete herself, and these are particularly reinforced by the repeat visit model.</li> <li>• This case provides an example of a non-sporting project where the athlete has brought sport in, arguably a more challenging setting as the host noted these are not necessarily sporty children.</li> <li>• In absence of further data regarding educational attendance and attainment and mental well-being, caution should be applied when interpreting the impact achieved through the athlete appearances until such data is provided.</li> <li>• When working with young people from challenging backgrounds, we need to be realistic regarding the positive impact that can be achieved through athlete appearances however, this case study evidences that athlete appearances can be used to support the work of projects targeting such groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neil Faiche</b></p> <p><i>Neil is a British Paralympic track cyclist based in the Manchester region who has competed in 3 Paralympic Games having converted from track and field after the Beijing Paralympics. Neil won London 2012 Paralympic gold and silver in the tandem B events for athletes with a visual impairment and followed that by winning a silver medal in the Individual Pursuit at the 2016 Rio Paralympic Games. His work with the Manchester Law firm is the focus of the case study.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The process was benefitted by the athlete having clarity regarding his interests. This made it easier for Steve Flynn to identify relevant opportunities and ensured the athlete's commitment to the appearances, once identified.</li> <li>• This is an interesting case study as the interests for the athlete were more aligned to their career aspirations beyond sport as opposed to a more social impact motive. That is not to judge the motives but to observe that by starting with the athlete's interests the deployment settings and objectives for appearances can look very different.</li> <li>• It is important to get beyond the identification of an interest in itself to develop a clearer understanding of what an athlete can do and specifically bring to a deployment partner. This is especially when the approach is being made to the deployment host organisation rather than vice versa.</li> <li>• The pre-meet between deployment host and athlete, facilitated by the RF, is valuable to understand the objectives for the planned appearances.</li> <li>• Understanding the desired impacts for UK Sport and Sport England when engaging in AVAs with corporate entities, and whether or not this should be more focussed on CSR agendas rather than supporting individual and economic development.</li> <li>• With the different deployment approach 'it is only going to work with the right marriage with a host equally as excited to be working with an athlete.' (Steve Flynn, Regional Facilitator, Interview on 28/11/19). A lack of engagement from the deployment host in the M&amp;E process has limited the amount of data that was possible to collect for this case study.</li> </ul>

Case Study	Summary of Findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The evidence highlights positive benefits of the appearances on beneficiaries, the host, and the athlete himself, and these are reinforced by the repeat visit model. There is, however, limited data on the beneficiaries themselves to develop a more meaningful understanding regarding the specific impacts.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ben Watson</b></p> <p><i>Ben joined AIP in one of the first cohorts. He is a British Paralympic track cyclist (C3) based in the Manchester region who is a graduate of the Great Britain Cycling Team foundation programme. He was recruited to the Great Britain Cycling Team programme in early 2017 and has aspirations to compete in his first Paralympic Games in Tokyo. His work with the EY foundation is the focus of this case study.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ben's case study is a further example of an athlete valuing the AIP DY3 approach of starting with their interests and passions, in this case with a focus on working with the corporate sector. It is also interesting to note whilst Ben's primary motivator was met, he was prepared to be flexible in terms of the specific audience, with young people not being Ben's stated preference. Finding a fit with Ben's primary motivator certainly seems to have helped to build trust with the Regional Facilitator and also patience in terms of finding the right deployment match.</li> <li>Ben's experience covered an example of a deployment match that didn't work out as intended, alongside the more successful relationship with the EY Foundation. There are some key reflections on how the failed match was ultimately important in helping to shape the Regional Facilitator's more general approach to the role. This includes the approach of trying to align more to CSR agendas when matching with corporate entities, and also understanding where deployment organisations are set up to know what to do with athlete appearances.</li> <li>Providing role clarity and briefing for the athlete helps to ensure the athlete is able to align their input towards the host's targeted outcome. Both quantitative and qualitative feedback indicates a positive relationship between the EY Foundation's targeted outcome and where Ben received the most positive feedback.</li> <li>It is evident that Ben had developed a positive relationship with the Regional Facilitator which was the crucial role in the process. This was despite some frustrations that Ben raised with the programme as a whole (primarily relating to training, the AAL role, and use of the AIP portal to collect data), and what would appear from the evidence to be a less than optimal relationship between the sport and AIP.</li> <li>The evidence highlights positive benefits of the appearances on beneficiaries, which are closely aligned to the targeted outcomes for the appearance, i.e., the individual development of the young people involved in the EY Foundation programmes. The beneficiary responses reported an increase in inspiration related towards more resilient, hard-working, and goal setting behaviours.</li> <li>The host and the athlete himself also emphasised the benefits and these are reinforced by the repeat visit model. The caveat with the repeat appearance model is recognising that the repeat appearances relate to the host and not the beneficiaries as Ben engaged with different groups of beneficiaries across his appearances</li> </ul>
<p><b>Niall Farrell</b></p> <p><i>Niall Farrell is a British Boxer who first represented Team GB in June 2017 at the European Championships in Ukraine where he achieved a silver medal. Although Niall had aspirations to compete in his first Olympic Games</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Niall's case study is a prime example of an athlete being intrinsically motivated to undertake athlete volunteer appearances. Importantly, in this case study, the athlete's decision to become involved in AIP in the first place, along with their subsequent appearances were undertaken on a voluntary basis.</li> <li>Niall's case study is an example of an athlete valuing the AIP DY3 approach of starting with their interests and passions, in this case with a focus on working with young, disadvantaged males.</li> <li>Knowledge of and gaining initial, gatekeeper protected, access to an appropriate deployment setting is key. In this case, the Regional Facilitator was able to discover the opportunity and broker the appearances.</li> </ul>

Case Study	Summary of Findings
<p><i>in Tokyo 2020, he has suffered from a long-term injury over the last year which has impacted his preparations. This case study focusses on his work with Heritage Park School in the Sheffield Region.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing role clarity and briefing for the athlete helps to ensure the athlete is able to align their input towards the host's targeted outcome. In this case it involved Niall meeting with PE staff at Heritage Park School and discussing the expectations around the individual sessions and the specific environment that Niall would encounter.</li> <li>• It is evident that Niall had developed a positive relationship with the Regional Facilitator which was the crucial role in the process.</li> <li>• A Repeat Appearance model enabled Niall to develop mutual trust and respect with the same group of beneficiaries and deployment host.</li> <li>• There is clear evidence that Niall's appearances had a positive impact on individual beneficiaries. However, it is important to highlight that changing the behaviour of one person in this context has the potential to influence multiple 'others' in the same community. The 'ripple effect' or 'multiplier effect' of changing the behaviour of older pupils permeates through to the younger ones, which demonstrates the potential of AIP to reach beyond the immediate audience and address multiple government outcomes.</li> <li>• AIP has provided an injured athlete with something to focus on beyond their sport with positive mental health benefits.</li> <li>• AIP has the potential to enable athletes to professionally develop skills and competencies necessary when transitioning away from sport.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kayla Bell</b></p> <p><i>Kayla Bell is a British Wheelchair Basketball player based in the Sheffield region who made her international debut as part of the 2018 World Championship squad. She helped the team to a place in the final and claimed the silver medal – both firsts for a GB Women's Team. This case study focusses on her work with Place2Be.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A prior relationship between an AIP member of staff and a relevant organisation (in this case the RF with Place2Be) greatly assisted the process of connecting an athlete with the deployment host.</li> <li>• A clear identification of the athlete's interests and passions, in this case with a focus on working within mental health initiatives, helps to ensure alignment with a suitable deployment host.</li> <li>• An aligned relationship between athlete interests and the objectives of the deployment host promotes authentic appearances being undertaken.</li> <li>• Identification of the athlete's preferences for delivery of appearances can assist with more engaged and sustained involvement with a deployment host.</li> <li>• A well-planned and dedicated launch event proved useful in this case to generate discussion around athlete interests and passions. The opportunity to discuss these with AIP and fellow athletes proving particularly important.</li> <li>• Providing the opportunity for the athlete to discuss expectations and clarify their input/delivery preferences with the deployment host ensured that appearances were impactful and sustained.</li> <li>• AIP has the potential to contribute the Government outcomes for sport, in this case physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, and individual development.</li> <li>• AIP has the potential to enable athletes to professionally develop skills and competencies necessary when transitioning away from sport.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sarah Hope</b></p> <p><i>Sarah Hope is a British Wheelchair Basketball player based in the Sheffield region who has been a</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A co-ordinated Sport Launch Event, which has defined support and input from a 'prominent figure' within the NGB, may enable better athlete engagement with athlete appearances. In this case, the launch event helped the athlete to re-evaluate her perception of appearances.</li> <li>• Enabling athletes to reflect upon and identify their interests and passions provides a strong foundation for athlete appearances. One-to-one follow up meetings between Regional Facilitators and athlete help support this process, in particular where the Regional Facilitator has the skill to be able to draw out this information. In addition, understanding an athlete's preferences for delivery are a vital component of the initial</li> </ul>

Case Study	Summary of Findings
<p><i>member of the GB Senior Women's squad since September 2017 and is preparing for her first Paralympic Games in Tokyo. Her work with the National Autism Society and Midlands Psychology form the basis of this case study.</i></p>	<p>athlete engagement process. Awareness of these preferences is important for informing discussions with potential Deployment Hosts and enabling athlete engagement with both the programme and deployment organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this case study, the lived experience of the athlete (and their willingness to share this lived experience) was instrumental as a springboard to establishing clarity around appearances and approaching relevant deployment organisations. However, it should not be assumed that all athletes will want to share their lived experiences.</li> <li>• In this case study, the Regional Facilitator role was vital to familiarising athletes with the notion of volunteer appearances and what they may entail, in particular with athletes who are new to funding/funded programmes. However, NGBs also need to recognise their responsibility to orient athletes with the factors which underpin a meaningful appearance.</li> <li>• Engagement with volunteer appearances appears stronger when athlete deployments reflect their interests and passions.</li> <li>• Identifying how and where an athlete's interests and passions might align with the aims and intentions of existing Sport England or National Lottery funded programmes may present a more efficient approach to athlete deployment.</li> <li>• Relatedly, stakeholders could increase their efforts to promote the programme to charities and/or organisations in receipt of National Lottery funding to leverage athlete appearance opportunities.</li> <li>• Detailed conversation between athlete and Deployment Host prior to the first appearance is vital in enabling the athlete to become better acquainted with the deployment organisation and provide clarity over how appearances will be undertaken.</li> <li>• Both the Regional Facilitator and Athlete Appearance Liaison roles are important to support athlete deployment and subsequent appearances. When these roles are integrated and undertaken by individuals with appropriate knowledge and experience of the unique demands of elite sport, athlete support is optimised.</li> <li>• Where an on-going relationship between athlete and Deployment Host is established, the potential to optimise the quality and impact of volunteer appearances is enhanced.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jude Hamer</b></p> <p><i>Jude Hamer is a British Wheelchair Basketball player based in the Sheffield Region who made her international debut at the 2009 Paralympic World Cup, subsequently going on to win a bronze medal with the GB Women at the 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015 &amp; 2017 European Championships. She competed at the World</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athletes see value in appearances when these are meaningful to the athlete and they have a clear purpose and objective.</li> <li>• A co-ordinated 'whole sport' Launch Event, which has defined support and input from a 'prominent figure' within the NGB and outlines the main aims of AIP, enables athletes to better consider and identify their interests and passions.</li> <li>• Matching athlete interests and passions with potential deployment hosts is fundamental to facilitating meaningful appearances. In this case, the athlete's lived experience of disability framed her volunteering experience. However, it should be recognised that lived experience may not always frame the athlete's interests and passions.</li> <li>• The process of athlete deployment benefitted significantly from the athlete's strong and facilitative relationship with the Regional Facilitator.</li> <li>• The Regional Facilitator role is crucial in counteracting the challenges faced by athletes both in connecting with potential deployment organisations, but also in following up and persisting with communications to negotiate and agree athlete appearances.</li> <li>• Deployment hosts may lack an appreciation of what athletes may be able to offer in respect of volunteer appearances. They may also lack understanding of the unique aspects of the elite sport context, in particular in understanding when athletes may be available to undertake</li> </ul>

Case Study	Summary of Findings
<p><i>Championships in 2010, 2014, and 2018, assisting the GB Women to its first ever World Championship podium finish in 2018, winning the Silver Medal. This case study coheres around Jude's work with the STEPS project.</i></p>	<p>appearances. A skilled Regional Facilitator can assist potential deployment organisations to understand how athlete deployments could be undertaken and what may constitute an appearance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An athlete-centred approach to training and support for volunteer appearances is beneficial, especially where it recognises individual athlete support needs and is cognisant of when and how this support should be provided. The current case demonstrates how co-ordinated and close working between the Regional Facilitator and Athlete Appearance Liaison may facilitate a stronger appreciation of athlete training and support needs.</li> <li>• In this case, a repeat appearance model, where a series of appearances are undertaken with the same deployment host, was preferred by the athlete and was deemed likely to enable a longer-term impact on beneficiaries and deployment host.</li> <li>• The impact of volunteer appearances may not always be immediately quantifiable and that any impact may be incremental, gradual or not able to be explicitly measured.</li> <li>• Relatedly, while impact may not always be able to be measured or quantified, it does not mean that the value of volunteer appearances is any less important or does not exist.</li> <li>• Support from a key figure within the NGB (in this case, the Performance Director) alongside a philosophy within a high-performance programme that promotes and places value on volunteer appearances, is critical to enhancing athlete engagement and the pursuit of meaningful volunteer appearance work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jimmy Bevis</b></p> <p><i>Jimmy is a British Disability Shooter based at Bisham Abbey who has performed at a number of World Championships and Paralympic Games, achieving Bronze Medal at the London 2012 Paralympics in the SH2 Mixed 10m air rifle prone. Jimmy's case study is based around his work with Active in the Community and in particular on his work as an athlete mentor for the programme.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jimmy's case study is an excellent of example of an athlete who benefits from an individualised approach to appearances.</li> <li>• Jimmy's case study is an example of an athlete valuing the AIP DY3 approach of starting with their interests and passions, in this case working with other athletes to explore how they can meet thro own goals and aspirations.</li> <li>• This case study is a rich example of the role that relationships can play in benefitting an athlete in their enabling and facilitating of appearances</li> <li>• It is clear in this case study, that Jimmy valued an excellent relationship with the Regional Facilitator, and this was a key part to the success of Jimmy's appearances</li> <li>• Issues are clear in terms of timelines to go from interests and passions to deployment. It is clear that geography and personal situations for each athlete is important.</li> <li>• Sports specific knowledge or familiarity with the context is key in any success the Athlete Appearance Liaison may have</li> <li>• Understanding social impact is complex with limited access to beneficiary data. This is exacerbated with non-traditional appearance (1-1 online chats in this case) and needs further consideration in a model that may have different success metrics than quantity of appearances.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 6.2: Summarising the Evolution of the AIP Delivery Model

Theme	DY1 Summary of Learning	DY2 Summary of Learning	DY3 Delivery Model Intention <sup>19</sup>
<b>Sport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The general understanding of the purpose of AIP is not consistent.</li> <li>Very few sports (2) offered AIP as a pure volunteering opportunity</li> <li>AIP is not heavily discussed across many Senior Management Team's</li> </ul>	<p>There are ongoing tensions relating to the role and purpose of AVAs, and AIP doesn't always fit well within that context, e.g. messages relating to quality and impact versus a focus on numbers and league tables.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of securing athlete and wider sport buy-in at the outset was noted</li> <li>There appears to remain a largely negative undertone to the narrative from sports relating to AVAs: I am keen to highlight what people have achieved and the benefits versus hounding people to log appearances. It ends up being seen as a negative thing. We need to change the narrative about AVAs. (sport C/D)</li> <li>Perceived benefits of improved confidence for athletes observed in 2 sports: 'Definitely 5-6 considerably more confident doing than before. 3 to 4 new people have done several appearances when they wouldn't have before.' (sport A)</li> </ul>	<p>The reset model will focus on three regions and the NGBs currently on AIP within those regions, who have shown a reasonable level of engagement, will be invited to continue with the programme i.e. Manchester (Para Cycling /Taekwondo), Sheffield (Wheelchair Basketball, Boxing and Para Table Tennis) and Bisham Abbey (Hockey, Para Rowing &amp; Disability Shooting) Those NGBs invited into DY3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must have demonstrated real engagement / commitment to AIP within its own hierarchy;</li> <li>Commit to attend the initial meeting [to scope out DY3 for that sport];</li> <li>Takes an active role in identifying/targeting athletes;</li> <li>Nominates its own NGB AIP link to act as the liaison person with the AIP delivery team; (we would want to encourage the NGB where possible to assign this role to the PLA but appreciate this may not always be the case);</li> <li>Ensures the NGB AIP link is geared/resourced to drive AIP from within the sport;</li> <li>Commits to support training/mentoring of AIP athletes from within the sport.</li> </ul> <p>The NGB/NGB AIP link (&amp; Performance Lifestyle Advisor (PLA) where possible if they are not the NGB link):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will assesses each athlete's interests/passions around appearances followed by their needs</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> Direct references to the AIP Reset Model (15/03/19)

Theme	DY1 Summary of Learning	DY2 Summary of Learning	DY3 Delivery Model Intention <sup>19</sup>
<b>Athlete Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was no prescribed view on which type of athlete should be on AIP. Sports were given freedom to decide. Feedback indicated that the programme is probably more tailored towards less experienced athletes at present.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity on who AIP is targeting is important: 'Not hitting the bullseye on any groups [by having a mix of experience together].' (sport A)</li> <li>Various indicators of increased athlete engagement in DY2.</li> </ul>	<p>relating to skills/characteristics applicable to all appearances (e.g. confidence).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggest targeting A-F funded athletes as greater chance of commitment;</li> <li>Athlete selection to be determined by the NGB with the NGB AIP link but it is crucial that athletes should want to be a part of AIP and not just be selected to do this;</li> <li>No prescriptive numbers for recruitment;</li> <li>The level of contact between the athlete, RF and AAL would be determined by the NGB/NGB AIP link (&amp; PLA if they are not the link person).</li> </ul>
<b>Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulty of scheduling training sessions has been a common challenge.</li> <li>Average of 1.5 attendances per athlete (year 1)</li> <li>Of the competencies, skills, motivation and knowledge specifically targeted in training we are yet to see an impact relative to the AVA cohort of athletes.</li> <li>4.76 (Tracking Survey 2) &amp; 4.50 (TS3) out of 7 – the extent to which training has enhanced appearance impact (n=17)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported challenges with training scheduling resulting in an under-utilisation of training capacity during DY2 (and across the life of AIP).</li> <li>Slightly contradictory feedback on training from sports and athletes – athlete post session feedback remains largely very positive, although feedback from sports is slightly more mixed regarding the value of the sessions.</li> <li>Anecdotal feedback from sports observed positive development of skills and confidence of some AIP athletes as a result of AIP training.</li> <li>There is a low level of identification of AIP training support as part of helping AIP athletes prepare for appearances.</li> <li>However, there is an identified demand from some AIP athletes (41 of 171 logs) for additional training and support needs, many of which correlate to the support offered through AIP. Reported confidence levels were lower amongst</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerations around training include acknowledging that it should be a flexible / bespoke approach based around athlete needs and that it will be arranged as and when it is needed, designed specifically for those who require it rather than with a specific number or type of sessions in mind.</li> <li>Training is part of an overall DY3 athlete support package and its design includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accommodating athlete interests/passions and the needs of an appearance;</li> <li>Adopting a responsive training approach to service the needs of individual athlete;</li> <li>The potential to deliver sessions regionally if a shared need across sports is identified;</li> <li>Athletes to be provided with Athlete Support Map to show what is provided.</li> <li>NGB AIP link (&amp; PLA if not the designated NGB link), AAL, and RF would maintain</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Theme	DY1 Summary of Learning	DY2 Summary of Learning	DY3 Delivery Model Intention <sup>19</sup>
<b>Mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited take up on mentoring – Athlete Peer Mentors (APMs) reported providing support for 29 athletes. This was inconsistent with data reported to Inspired Exchange (now Athletes Inspire) by APMs but however correlates to original needs analysis regarding mentor interest.</li> <li>Role clarity alignment to core purpose?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentees never or rarely ask for a pep talk before an appearance. The majority never or rarely de-brief with their APM.</li> <li>APMs are saying they aren't hearing about doing appearances.</li> <li>Apparent lack of clarity with athletes about what the mentoring is.</li> <li>APMs viewing mentoring in the truest sense of the term. APMs trying to be all things to all athletes but not all athletes need that.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>those athletes identifying additional training and support needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Athlete Appearance Liaison's (AAL) reported that the revised/refocused role in DY2 was helping them to have a greater engagement and impact in their role with supporting athletes with appearances.</li> <li>The evidence across the programme highlights that it takes time for AALs/mentors to develop trusted relationships with athletes.</li> <li>The biggest reported challenge to fulfilling the AAL role is the buy in from the sports and the athletes.</li> <li>Time lag challenges 34% (28/82 athletes) athletes met 1-to-1 with their AAL in Q3 2018 (Q1 in DY2).</li> </ul>	<p>ongoing dialogue around athlete training needs.</p> <p>Clarity around the AAL role is essential to ensure that it integrates with the NGB link/PLA/RF roles, therefore the proposal includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AAL offers the opportunity for face-to-face time with athletes to gain respect, build relationships, develop more personalised support; initial contact would be once an athlete opts in to the AIP process and with the agreement of NGB AIP link;</li> <li>AAL providing support for athletes pre, during, post appearances if requested – encourage reflective practice; promote social media around appearances;</li> <li>Liaise regularly with RF around appearances;</li> <li>Ensuring AALs are equipped to cover all athlete support needs;</li> <li>Model includes three AALs to cover the identified regions.</li> </ul>
<b>Athlete Support (Regional Facilitator)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable. This function didn't come in until DY2.</li> </ul>	<p>Key learnings from the Manchester DY2 Local Deployment Pilot include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying Athlete needs and interests – the ability to do this effectively is important - trust and developing rapport is a key feature. It is apparent that the broker has done this with some of his athletes. The ability to get access to the athletes is key here.</li> <li>Matching - having knowledge of athletes and local knowledge of where to deploy – this is shown to be effective (albeit working from a</li> </ul>	<p>RFs will have a strong local knowledge/network. The role includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brokering relationships locally to source opportunities focused on the underrepresented sector and educate potential hosts around M &amp; E role, its value/potential positive impact; and working with NGB AIP link/individual athletes to source impactful appearances;</li> <li>Attending the initial meeting with the relevant NGB/NGB AIP link/AIP delivery team/AAL to agree protocols around the level of direct engagement the NGB is happy for the RF to</li> </ul>



Theme	DY1 Summary of Learning	DY2 Summary of Learning	DY3 Delivery Model Intention <sup>19</sup>
		<p>small sample set). This feature of the pilot has been different to other aspects of deployment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity between the role of the deployment broker (RF) and AAL – this potentially is cleaner in the reset approach as the broker would not have (as much) direct success to the athletes.</li> <li>• Awareness of M&amp;E – a benefit of the model is that this has already warmed up with Deployment Hosts who have largely been accommodating.</li> <li>• Sport Engagement – it is evident that some sports are more engaged in AIP than others. By going to a purely geographical model means that it is conceivable that there are a range of different levels of engagement from the sports remaining on the programme. The support of the sport and the PLA are key to the proposed reset approach.</li> </ul>	<p>have with athletes; suggest the greater the level of direct contact will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- help the RF understand individual athlete passions/interests more fully;</li> <li>- RF being seen in a supportive role</li> <li>- RF can provide examples of appearance opportunities</li> <li>- RF gets a sense of what type of projects an athlete might be interested in supporting</li> <li>- RF can give a potential project lead details around an athlete’s capabilities</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planned and regular communication with the relevant NGB AIP link/AAL/M &amp; E for all work with their athletes;</li> <li>• Targeting regional/local organisations that have greatest potential to work within a repeat appearance model and reflect the Government’s five outcomes;</li> <li>• Envisage an allocation of 30 days for the role per region.</li> </ul>
<b>Deployment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deployment was not working as intended. 12 managed deployments to the end of DY1.</li> <li>• Deployment strategy - from 5 max to 10 DPs; not always correlated to athlete location.</li> <li>• AIP deployment opportunities are harder for an athlete to do – logistical ease is important</li> <li>• Many DPs are keen to have the relationship directly with the athletes – for better matching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 58 appearances identified through the Athletes Inspire deployment database (36 direct, 18 locally sourced including 15 within Manchester, and 4 brokered through third parties)</li> <li>• The managed deployment model has not been able to generate the desired number of appearances hence the evolution of the approach with the local deployment pilot in Manchester designed to test new principles.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach to deployment to be focussed solely on appearances brokered by the new Regional Facilitator role in each region.</li> <li>• Approach no longer focussed on volume of appearances or understanding the appearances that athletes undertake outside of AIP support.</li> </ul>

Appendix 6.3: DY3 Athlete Journey

DY3 Reset - Athlete Journey



Notes

Although the athlete journey is presented as a linear process, there are points along the journey where processes may well occur in parallel, eg, athlete support package implemented whilst the matching exercise is being done by the RFs.

## Appendix 6.4: Appearance Overview by Athlete (from UK Sport portal reporting of appearances to September 2020)

Athlete (Code)	Region	Sport	Total appearances	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Cumulative no. of appearances since Apr 19	AIP Appearances in DY1/2?	AIP Appearances (since Apr 19)	No. of non AIP Appearances reported
SPBDB	Sheffield	Para Badminton	4					1	3	4	N/A	1	3
SPBJS	Sheffield	Para Badminton	5					2	3	5	N/A	0	5
SPBKC	Sheffield	Para Badminton	2					1	1	3	N/A	2	1
SPBMR	Sheffield	Para Badminton	3					2	1	3	N/A	0	3
SDTJH	Sheffield	Disability TT	49	3	2	9	25	10	0	12	No	2	10
SDTMP	Sheffield	Disability TT	36			2	18	16	0	16	N/A	1	15
SBXNF	Sheffield	Boxing	30		6	11	9	4	0	5	Yes	5	0
SBXLW	Sheffield	Boxing	20			6	11	3	0	4	No	1	3
SWBSC	Sheffield	WCBasketball	29	3	10	4	6	3	3	6	N/A	5	1
SWBSF	Sheffield	WCBasketball	24	3	5	6	5	4	1	5	No	1	4
SWBSH	Sheffield	WCBasketball	17			2	4	7	4	14	Yes	7	7
SWBRL	Sheffield	WCBasketball	37	4	6	4	9	3	11	14	No	0	14
SWBKB	Sheffield	WCBasketball	28	5	1	8	4	8	2	10	Yes	5	5
SWBLW	Sheffield	WCBasketball	22	4	1	5	5	4	3	7	N/A	5	2
SWBJH	Sheffield	WCBasketball	29	4	7	6	6	3	3	9	Yes	6	3
SWBJH I	Sheffield	WCBasketball	23	2	9	4	5	3	0	3	No	0	3
SWBAC	Sheffield	WCBasketball	35	6	6	3	5	8	7	15	Yes	1	14
MPCBWV	Manchester	Para Cycling	18			1	3	12	2	12	Yes	4	8
MPCLF	Manchester	Para Cycling	35		9	8	6	9	3	9	Yes	4	8
MPCMR	Manchester	Para Cycling	32			5	14	9	4	13	Yes	0	13
MPCMG	Manchester	Para Cycling	54	8	6	7	11	19	3	19	Yes	10	16
MPCNF	Manchester	Para Cycling	38	4	8	8	6	7	5	12	Yes	5	8
MPCLR	Manchester	Para Cycling	30	4	8	5	7	6	0	6	No	0	6
MTKBS	Manchester	Taekwondo	20		2	6	5	7	0	7	No	2	7
MTKRM	Manchester	Taekwondo	21		4	9	1	7	0	2	Yes	5	2
MCYAF	Manchester	Cycling	23			9	9	2	3	5	N/A	0	5
MCYJB	Manchester	Cycling	10			3	2	5	0	0	N/A	0	0
MCYZB	Manchester	Cycling	26			3	7	10	6	16	N/A	0	16
MCYAD	Manchester	Cycling	17		1	7	4	2	3	3	N/A	0	3
MCYJK	Manchester	Cycling	5					4	1	5	N/A	0	5
BDSLL	Bisham	Disability Shooting	92	12	13	15	10	19	23	42	Yes	12	41
BDSRC	Bisham	Disability Shooting	22	1	8	4	7	2	0	2	No	2	0
BDSJB	Bisham	Disability Shooting	31	7	0	5	0	4	15	19	No	7	12
BDSIB	Bisham	Disability Shooting	25	2	4	6	1	4	8	12	No	0	12
BDSTJ	Bisham	Disability Shooting	39	5	12	7	5	2	8	10	No	4	6
BPREB	Bisham	Para Rowing	17	0	0	0	5	9	3	12	N/A	0	12
BPREVJ	Bisham	Para Rowing	15	0	0	4	5	5	1	6	N/A	0	6
BPRLR	Bisham	Para Rowing	17	1	7	1	4	4	0	4	N/A	0	4
BPRLV	Bisham	Para Rowing	19	2	6	6	3	2	0	2	N/A	0	2
BPRGR	Bisham	Para Rowing	15	0	0	1	10	2	2	4	Yes	1	3
BPRBP	Bisham	Para Rowing	7	0	0	0	3	4	0	4	N/A	2	2

## Key:

- Green = AIP start point
- Grey = AIP opt out (where applicable)
- Athlete code used for anonymity

## Appendix 6.5: Athlete Journey Learnings

Stage <sup>20</sup>	Research Observations
<p>2. UK Sport comms to sports; NGBs invited to confirm acceptance onto DY3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 sports were originally invited to be part of DY3 based on those already on AIP who had <i>'shown a reasonable level of engagement.'</i></li> <li>• In reality the 'confirm acceptance' came after the sport introduction meeting's, and in some cases was quite protracted, with official confirmation or otherwise not taking place until Quarter 2 of DY3. For instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hockey opted out after engaging in the sport introduction meeting. The meeting took place on the 30/05/19 with the opt out decision communicated 7 weeks later on 17/07/19. In itself Hockey was an interesting choice of DY3 sport. The DY2 report noted that: <i>'Hockey athletes recruited from December 18, the same point at which decisions were being taken on the DY3 reset. No training was delivered.'</i> (AIP M&amp;E DY2 Report, August 2019)</li> <li>- Taekwondo's sport introduction meeting didn't take place until the 13/06/19. Confirmation of involvement in DY3 came at the end of July. <i>'NA has spoken to both and they wish to continue with AIP but only access support through S Flynn which AW confirmed is fine as its about ensuring a bespoke approach for each athlete.'</i> (AI telephone notes of a conversation with Taekwondo AIP contact, 26/07/19).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Para Cycling opted out without taking up the option of a sport introduction meeting and prior to hearing about the reset approach. They subsequently made a decision to allow the athletes already engaged in AIP to see how pre agreed deployment matches through to June 2019 where there was a desire from the athletes to see out these commitments. In reality these commitments continued beyond June for three of the athletes, and one of these developed a completed new deployment relationship within DY3 (see Ben Watson case study).</li> <li>• Para Badminton (Sheffield) and Cycling (Manchester) were subsequently added to the AIP list of DY3 sports. Shooting was added in late June 2020 and had three athletes doing some preliminary support work on AIP.</li> </ul>
<p>3. DY3 initial meeting – UK Sport, NGB, NGB AIP link, PLA (if not NGB link), Regional Facilitator (RF), AAL, Athlete Inspire Manager (AIM), M &amp; E.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the 8 sports originally identified sport introduction meetings were conducted with 7 of those sports. A sport introduction meeting was subsequently held with Para Badminton following identification that they could be a potential replacement for Hockey and Para Cycling.</li> <li>• Deviations from the process included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The first set of sport introduction meetings took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> April, prior to formal agreement of the Athlete Journey, and prior to an all-team session to talk through roles and responsibilities. AI were clearly keen to make a prompt start on the DY3 approach and capitalise on initial interest from sports, but there were risks in terms of being ready. It is evident that this particularly related to the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> Stages correspond to the numbered stages in the Athlete Journey as presented in Appendix 6.3.

Stage <sup>20</sup>	Research Observations
	<p>presentation of the Athlete Journey, as highlighted above, which was not a substantial focus for the meetings despite the original intention to use this as a basis for understanding roles and responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The intention was for the sport meetings to take place individually in order to have time to fully understand the dynamics of individual sports. However due to having a shared PLA the Wheelchair Basketball and Disability Table Tennis introduction meeting was merged together.</li> <li>- See Para Cycling comments under step 2 above.</li> <li>- There was no formal sport introduction meeting for Cycling. Their involvement in AIP was agreed via a series of phone calls between the PLA (who had confirmed he had consulted with staff internally including the Performance Pathway Manager) and AI.</li> <li>- Representation for the sports was mixed across these meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The email from UK Sport invited sports to this meeting outlined: <i>'We would like to ensure that all levels of the NGB are engaged in order to support the new direction of AIP and we therefore would like the following people to be in attendance: PDI/ Head Coach (we do not expect both of these to be present), PL Advisor, AVA lead if they are currently involved with AIP (in some sports this is a different person).'</i></li> <li>- Of the 8 sport introduction meetings that took place with the following range of attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 meetings were attended by either the Performance Director or Head Coach (Wheelchair Basketball, Para Badminton, Para Rowing)</li> <li>▪ 3 meetings were attended by NGB staff in performance operation roles (Hockey, Disability Shooting, Boxing)</li> <li>▪ 1 meeting was attended by a different member of NGB staff (comms and AVA lead) (Taekwondo)</li> <li>▪ The PLA attended in 7 of the 8 meetings (Para Badminton was the exception)</li> <li>▪ 1 meeting was attended by PLA only with no NGB staff present (Disability Table Tennis)</li> <li>▪ An Athlete representative was present for 1 meeting (Para Rowing).</li> </ul> </li> <li>- It is unknown to what degree there was internal engagement with senior members of the NGB hierarchy outside of the sport introduction meetings. Whilst the presence or not of senior members of staff within the NGBs at the sport introduction meetings is not evidence in itself of a lack of engagement / commitment to AIP within its own hierarchy, it is noteworthy given it was a direct request from UK Sport, and it was a logical point to engage to understand the strategic fit and set the direction for how AIP might work for an individual sport.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
4. NGB/NGB AIP link confirm initial DY3 athletes opting in by	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all sports were able to commit to what their approach to athlete selection would be as part of the sport introduction meeting, partly because there was a degree of non-commitment regarding opting into DY3 or not. This process was done outside of the meeting.</li> </ul>

Stage <sup>20</sup>	Research Observations
<p>agreed deadline (athletes can still opt in at any time); athlete list shared with M &amp; E.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was evident that this phase was more time consuming than originally envisaged. The quickest time for a response with athlete names was around 5 weeks, whilst the longest was 7 months (Cycling). A contributory factor in this might be that this is the sport for whom there was no sport introduction meeting at the outset of their DY3 engagement.</li> <li>• It is evident that there is a low level of awareness amongst the AIP delivery team regarding the recruitment approach adopted by the different NGBs, in terms of whether they openly recruited across their sport, whether they targeted a select cohort, which may or may not have been the existing AIP athletes, or the degree to which the opportunity was presented as voluntary for the athletes.</li> <li>• It is apparent that c50% of DY3 athletes are new to AIP in DY3, with 9 athletes identified through the 2 new sports (Para Badminton and Cycling).</li> <li>• Some existing AIP athletes opted out of DY3, for instance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>'JH stated of the eight boxers currently on AIP, all have opted out except for Niall Farrell for the following reasons – - all feel comfortable enough doing appearances; - crucial year for qualification; - don't feel this area is massively important for them. (16/05/19 meeting note of call between AI and Boxing PLA)</i></li> <li>- As noted, the Para Cycling athletes opted out of AIP in DY3, with the agreement that 3 of the 6 could complete existing matched deployment opportunities that were set up in DY2. Feedback from the PLA on his dialogue with the athletes was that they couldn't see more value in another year and as a more experienced group of athletes felt they could have done this off their own backs. (Para Cycling PLA Interview, 14/10/19)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• An AIP 'launch' event phase was adopted with some sports either pre- or post-recruitment with differing degrees of success. The idea originated with Wheelchair Basketball and was subsequently agreed with Para Badminton and Cycling. The principle behind these events was to introduce AIP, and the individuals who would be working with the athletes to brief them directly and start to develop relationships. Whilst the format and approach could be flexible the principle of making a positive first impression of the programme would certainly resonate with the feedback from Para Cycling: <i>'You have got one opportunity to make a really good impact. If not the chances of them revisiting it are slim. This particularly with anything that is taking time that doesn't involve performance.'</i> (Para Cycling PLA Interview, 14/10/19)</li> </ul>
<p>5. NGB AIP link (&amp; possibly RF) discuss with athletes their interests/passions and share with RF/AAL; RF to then share with AAL/AIM/M &amp; E.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is evident from the outset of DY3 that UK Sport were keen to place the PLA as closest contact to athlete through the reset approach building on the existing capacity and relationships in the system. Their expectation was that the interests of the athlete would be identified through the sport, and whilst the exact individual in the sport (e.g., PLA, AVA lead) might differ depending on the sport there was a desire to ensure PLAs from all sports were involved. The RFs would be responsible for identifying local opportunities and responding to requests from PLs once athlete's 'skills, interests and passions' were identified.</li> </ul>

Stage <sup>20</sup>	Research Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The RFs were keen at the outset that they could be part of these discussions to help develop a relationship with the athlete and ensure they had a chance to probe and understand their interests properly.</li> <li>• In reality in all instances the RF has been involved in the interests and passion discussion with the athletes and in some instances, they have been given permission to go straight to the athlete without the need for the PLA to be present. Feedback from PLA indicated that their capacity was the driver behind this decision.</li> <li>• Feedback from the RFs highlights that they consider it really important for their role to be able to be in the room for the athletes and passions discussion.</li> </ul>
6. Athlete support package around interests/passions agreed – athlete, NGB link & RF; RF to share with AAL & AIM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was slow to kick in during DY3 but through the development of the case studies it has been possible to identify that there has been valued support taken up by AIP athletes.</li> <li>• It was evident that the offer of support needed to be overt in order for athletes to consider this at the appropriate point.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It was evident that Neil was undertaking a ‘huge time commitment to do the planning and create the content’ referencing that each appearance took 2+ hours to prepare for. Neil noted that he spoke to a couple of people and did some research but ‘still felt massively underprepared. I had planned well but until you do it you still don’t know.... It probably would have helped to test my general structure plan past somebody. I was wasting time and trying to do too much.’ When asked whether he asked for support via AIP Neil said ‘a lot has been talking about storytelling. I did ask questions. I almost forgot there was an option there to go to. I either forgot or chose not to use it.’ (Neil Fachie, Athlete, Interview on 22/10/19). In Neil’s case AI support was provided but there was no recall of this during interview.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The project review processes put in place by AI ensured that this was identified as a challenge to allow the team to put in place steps to try and proactively address this gap. Section 3.6 outlines the value of support received by AIP athletes.</li> </ul>
8. RF facilitates matching local project aligned to athlete interests/passions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a number of interesting insights on the Manchester deployment matching which were initially further advanced because a lot of the foundations of this work were based in the DY2 local deployment pilot and given Manchester and Sheffield regions have the same RF, learnings have more easily been embedded across to the work in Sheffield.</li> <li>• It is evident that finding the win-win relationship between deployment host (DH) and athlete is key, not least because this model presents a different dynamic to many other appearances where the athlete is often approached with requests. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘It felt as though they were doing me a favour rather than a great opportunity.... It felt like I had to win them over a bit to start with.’ (Neil Fachie, Athlete, Interview on 22/10/19)</li> <li>- ‘The challenge is we are offering them something they [the deployment host] haven’t asked for. Certainly not in the timeframe we might want... Where this model falls down is if there isn’t hunger on both sides.’ (Steve Flynn, RF, Interview on 28/11/19).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Stage <sup>20</sup>	Research Observations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It appears similarly important that prospective DHs have a structure in place to be able to manage and deploy athletes (in a way that aligns to their specific interests). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflecting on a ‘failed match’ with an organisation <i>‘I got the sense they didn’t quite know how to take advantage of the opportunity. It felt like they were trying to accommodate us rather than exploit [the opportunity] in a meaningful way. (Steve Flynn, RF interview on 10/03/20)</i></li> <li>- <i>However tactfully, I do try to make sure they [the deployment host] fully understands the opportunity, the nature of the partnership and the commitment that is required of them to make it work. There is a due diligence. On paper it looked like a really good fit. The private sector aren’t necessarily geared up for doing these sorts of things. A bit like the sports themselves there is a bit of an ad hoc approach. Going forwards I will look to position as part of a Trust, Foundation or associated charity [of a corporate organisation] rather than embedded in commercial activities. That influenced the EY discussions. It felt like a nice marriage of the two. And it influenced the KPMG discussion [related to a Taekwondo athlete]. (Steve Flynn, RF interview on 10/03/20)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Bisham has presented a different type of challenge. The deployment model for DY3 was based around centrally based sports. This was part of the original intention in identifying Bisham. However, the approach has not emerged this way with Hockey (centralised sport) opting out and the other sports operating on a decentralised basis. This provides a different set of challenges in terms of deployment matching to organisations in different areas of the country, where the RF was specifically recruited for his networks and knowledge in the Bisham area, and who acknowledged themselves, may not have an existing network of contacts in lots of different areas of the country to work from. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The above would highlight a flaw with the original strategy for identifying Bisham, with the decentralised nature of 2 of the 3 identified sports not flagged as part of the early decision making.</li> <li>- The unintended opportunity through the way that Bisham has evolved means that AIP was able to test how the process can adapt and work for decentralised sports. This has also influenced the RF in Manchester and Sheffield to explicitly suggest to athletes that they may wish to explore appearance opportunities closer to their home rather than training base.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>9. RF shares info around potential matched project with NGB link who then provides an initial filter; if NGB states not a match RF looks for other projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It became apparent that in many instances this stage in the Athlete Journey was not as critical, with the liaison over appearance fit often taking place between the RF and athlete direct.</li> <li>• Central to this has been the relationship of trust that has built up between the PLA (primarily) and AIP team, that meant they were happy for the communications to be managed direct, and for them to just be kept in the loop.</li> </ul>
<p>11b. Athlete says yes - NGB link connects athlete with RF who brokers athlete’s introduction to the deployment host; RF makes M</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Linked to stage 9 above, because the sports were often less central in the deployment discussions the engagement would usually already be taking place directly between the RF and athlete, following in the interests and passions discussion (stage 5).</li> </ul>



Stage <sup>20</sup>	Research Observations
& E aware and sets up introduction to Deployment Host.	
12. RF works with NGB link / athlete / deployment host to confirm dates for repeat appearances; athlete makes NGB link (or RF) aware of needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were slight variations in regional approach as to how hands-on the RF would be with the ongoing interactions with athlete and deployment host. It is evident that the RF for Manchester and Sheffield sought a more hands-on role, including accompanying the athlete to initial meetings with deployment hosts and even shadowing some appearances. By his own admission Steve Flynn's role expanded to a more of a co-mentoring role with many athletes.</li> </ul>
14. Athlete needs arising from matching project to be identified by NGB link/RF; RF shares needs with RF with AAL / M & E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was evident that this stage was very flexible in terms of how the specific athlete support needs for an appearance / deployment organisation were identified. However, within a number of the case studies it was evident that the AAL and / or the RF usually played a central role in the discussion with the athlete.</li> </ul>
15. Athlete receives pre appearance support e.g. AAL helps individual prepare for role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section 3.6 in the report highlights the value of the support model for many of the athletes involved in AIP. Boxer Niall Farrell is one of the stronger examples of where this has been seen to work well. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The support's been brilliant. If you need anything, everyone's just a message away. And I feel like due to obviously, the team, I think that's made me gain confidence, because they've kind of supported me and said, 'Look, you've got it' do you know what I mean like, when I've needed it, 'don't worry about it'... And spoke to me, and I think that's the big one cause like. I could all go to a school like and be a bit like 'I dont know' but if someone's going to you 'listen, you know what you've got to do, just, all you've got to do now is just get there'... I mean, I think that's the main reason people won't want to go into schools because they don't know how, they haven't got no one supporting them in that way. (Niall Farrell, Boxer, October 2020)</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where this support might not have worked as well includes examples of where athletes specifically cited that they were unaware of the type of support on offer or had been made the offer but had not recalled this when prompted. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When asked whether he asked for support via AIP Para Cyclist Neil Fachie said <i>'a lot has been talking about storytelling. I did ask questions. I almost forgot there was an option there to go to. I either forgot or chose not to use it.'</i> (Neil Fachie, Athlete, Interview on 22/10/19).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
17. Athlete reflective practice post appearance - portal completion and may include AAL/RF feedback from actual appearance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the case study evidence, it would appear that much of the reflective practice was facilitated through a combination of the AAL and/or the RF (depending on the mix of support being provided to the athletes).</li> </ul>
18. NGB AIP link discusses options with athlete e.g. athlete completes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The case studies provide a number of examples of athletes demonstrating an intent to maintain a relationship with their DH beyond the support offered by AIP (Jude Hamer, Sarah Hope, Ben Watson, Megan Giglia). In contrast Neil Fachie commented that he didn't believe his relationship with the Manchester Law Firm would continue beyond the appearance set he conducted with them. The perception from both</li> </ul>

Stage <sup>20</sup>	Research Observations
<p>appearance and decides project not the right fit; athlete completes appearance and it is the final one agreed; athlete wants to do another appearance.</p>	<p>Neil and the RF was that the relationship wasn't balanced with the perception that the Manchester Law Firm were doing Neil a favour rather than embracing it as an opportunity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ben Watson case study is informative as he had a 'failed' deployment match with one DH and a second relationship with the EY Foundation which he hoped would sustain beyond the initial appearance set that he conducted. With reference to the Bruntwood relationship Ben commented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>'The Bruntwood experience is what it is – it didn't click – we tried it. We explored a couple of avenues. You move on. The learning experience was that it was one of my first real presentations as an athlete. I tried to shoehorn things in.'</i> (Ben Watson, Athlete interview on 28/01/20)</li> <li>- Steve Flynn's feedback identified that a deployment host needs to be more than a willing organisation. 'I got the sense they didn't quite know how to take advantage of the opportunity. It felt like they were trying to accommodate us rather than exploit [the opportunity] in a meaningful way. (Steve Flynn, RF interview on 10/03/20)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Jude Hamer's case study presents a great illustration of how, having made the connection with Steps (the DH), she was eager to maintain this relationship both during, but also following, her career in elite sport. On intentions to retain contact with Steps, Jude disclosed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I hope so, yeah. I'm not planning on it being like just through sport. I'd like to keep working with them. They're pretty keen that the story isn't that I'm an athlete. That's not why I'm an ambassador. It's all the other things I've done as well as sport, like going to uni, being successful in my sporting career, but also having got my education and having the hospital experiences that some of the kids will have had. So it's not solely based around that I'm an athlete that I am part of the charity.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>