

Guidance Notes for Equity Policy Development and Action Planning

Section One

Introduction

The majority of Partnerships have now received Lottery awards and are implementing activity as well as working on the production of strategic development plans for new sports. As part of the initial application for Lottery funding, Partnerships are required to submit an equity policy statement supported by an equity action plan as part of the Partnership Services plan. This guidance note has been produced following an analysis of a sample of Partnership applications to assist Partnerships to further develop and strengthen equity policies and action plans.

Equity as a core value

The evidence that equity is an integral part of the core values that drive a Partnership will be evidenced by the relationship it develops with the community within which it works. The initial time invested in building relationships and trust with communities will be important for a Partnership's credibility and ability to meet set targets.

Key issues for policy development

It is important to understand the difference between an equity policy and an equal opportunities policy. Equal opportunities policies, introduced in the 1980s and still in use today, are intended to help employers interpret anti-discrimination legislation with regard to employment practices and service provision. Equity policies, introduced in the 1990s are intended to reinforce the need for fair and unbiased practices and to bring about a change in the culture of organisations. The term 'sports equity' was introduced as a way of making equal opportunities more relevant to sports organisations and to encourage them to acknowledge and address existing inequalities.

Equity policies may include employment practices, service provision and a commitment to change the ethos of sport to be more inclusive. Sports equity should be regarded as part of the Government's modernising sport agenda. In some organisations equity has simply replaced the term equal opportunities, without losing the key practices.

Partnerships need to:

- Clarify which policies and procedures they need to develop for themselves and those they can adopt from the host agency or other partners.
- Ensure they have adopted procedures, practices and codes of conduct that comply with current legislation and meet funding conditions.

What policies and procedures does the Partnership need to adopt?

As well as the minimum requirements of the programme, Partnerships should look to have the following policies and procedures in place to help ensure that equity objectives are met and that good practice is adopted.

- Sports equity policy statement (Example : Appendix 1)
- Sports equity policy (Example : Appendix 2)
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Customer care policy
- Code of conduct
- Guidelines for employment practices
- Anti-discrimination practices

Sports equity policy statement

What should the statement include?

A sports equity policy statement is the first stage of developing a more detailed equity policy and is the touchstone against which all future policies, programmes and achievements can be assessed. An example of a sports equity policy statement can be found in Appendix 1.

The statement is intended primarily for the public and should send a strong message to the local community about the scope of the services the Partnership intends to provide and should demonstrate its commitment to equity.

Reviewing the statement

Sports equity policy statements need to be relevant to the Partnership. Those Partnerships that have adopted Sport England's statement without making any changes, should consider the need to revise it to ensure that it is written with the audience in mind, that it is written in plain English and that it is user friendly.

Sports equity policy

Policy development

This is the second stage of developing the sports equity policy statement and is simply a more detailed document that covers all the Partnership's functions and legal responsibilities. The sports equity policy is designed to achieve a number of objectives and should include reference to:

- **Employment practices** that promote fair and effective recruitment and selection practices for employees and volunteers.
- **Protection** for all staff and service users from unfair or unlawful discrimination including sexual and racial harassment and bullying.
- **Service provision** that is accessible and sensitive to all potential client groups within the limits of its brief.

- **Training and Education** programmes that raise awareness, improve skills and confidence and empower local communities.
- **Commitment** to the development and empowerment of priority groups.
- **Representation** of priority groups in all areas of the Partnership's activities.
- **Legislation and positive action-** a summary of the key anti-discrimination Acts and instances when positive action can be used lawfully.
- **Standards of behaviour** for staff and volunteers including reference to discrimination and harassment.
- **Grievance procedure** outlining a formal procedure to enable staff to bring a grievance to the attention of management.
- **Disciplinary procedure** outlining a formal procedure for dealing with misconduct or a breach of conduct.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** detailing methods and frequency.
- **Sports equity action plans** to help with the implementation of the policy.

Adopting a sports equity policy

Each Partnership must decide whether it wants to develop its own sports equity policy or adopt one belonging to the host agency or another partner. Although the decision rests with each Partnership, there are positive advantages for those who choose to develop their own policy:

- Through the process of developing the policy, staff and key partners are more likely to have a better understanding about the scope of equity.
- The process will help to develop ownership by key partners, staff and volunteers.
- The content should be relevant to the main functions and scope of the programme.
- Managers and staff will be better informed about their responsibilities.

Partnerships who intend to develop their policy may find the example provided in Appendix 2 useful.

Disciplinary and grievance procedures

A disciplinary procedure outlines the formal procedure for dealing with misconduct or a breach of conduct, whereas a grievance procedure is a formal procedure enabling staff to bring a grievance to the attention of management.

Customer care procedure

As a provider of services, Partnerships need to demonstrate their commitment to customer care and to providing a high quality of service to the community by promoting a procedure that will enable the public to register complaints and suggestions with the Partnership. The host agency should have a customer care policy which the Partnership could adopt or adapt for its own use.

Code of conduct

A code of conduct for staff, volunteers and young people should include discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation and be linked to the disciplinary and grievance procedures. Coaches and officials should also be encouraged to sign up to their National Governing Body's code of conduct.

Guidelines for employment practices

Guidelines have been produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission to help employers promote equality of opportunity in employment. Partnerships are encouraged to use the guidelines to check that job advertisements do not include conditions or requirements that may discriminate against a particular ethnic group or disabled group.

Anti-discrimination practices

In addition to producing an equity statement, Partnerships are strongly encouraged to produce a separate statement, outlining their commitment to challenging racism, sexism, disability discrimination or poverty in the community. The adoption of a specific statement may be a response to instances of racism or sexism occurring in the local community.

Partnerships should also sign up to the Racial Equality Charter for Sport and be looking to achieve at least the Preliminary Level of the Racial Equality Standard, as well as signing up to the Women's Sport Foundation National Action Plan. Signing up to other sport specific campaigns endorsed by the Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Disability Rights Commission should also be considered.

Section Two

Analysis of existing Partnership equity action plans

Introduction

Quality sports equity action plans are vital to ensure that statements and policies are carried through into action and therefore the implementation of positive change. An analysis of a sample of existing Partnership sports equity action plans was undertaken by the key equity organisations and an expert adviser and two key development areas emerged from the analysis:

- The need to improve the level of detail on how equity objectives will be achieved.
- The need for stronger reference to key areas of equity work that will bring about positive change.

Specific issues were identified through the analysis in relation to the following areas:

Research and information

Although the majority of Partnerships commented on the lack of participation data for the key priority groups, few equity plans included any actions to undertake any further research.

Awareness and skills training

Disability awareness training featured highly in most action plans but few plans included any reference to cultural or gender awareness. There was also little reference generally to how Partnerships identify training requirements or how they intend to measure the effectiveness of training.

Development of programmes

Although Partnerships have set clear equity targets in their plans, the majority do not include sufficient detail to demonstrate how targets will be achieved. For example, it is unlikely that a Partnership will achieve a set target of disabled coaches in year one in an area or region where there is little or no evidence of any previous development. The action plan should include the steps needed to engage and empower people, such as networking, consultation, outreach in the community and training. Partnerships may find it more practical to develop an action plan for a particular priority group.

Consultation

The development planning process for annual plans needs a stronger focus on how Partnerships intend to consult with priority groups or local communities. Action plans need to show how Partnerships intend to build relationships with those communities that have not traditionally been involved in sport as well as

establishing programme needs or the barriers and constraints that they experience.

Empowering people

The issue of how the Partnership will help to empower local people through the programme is also an area that does not come through particularly strongly in some of the initial plans. Partnerships need to consider how to attract local people into coaching and volunteer programmes as well as the whole management, planning and implementation process.

Monitoring

Although reference is made to numerical monitoring, few plans include any reference to qualitative monitoring. Programme quality and user satisfaction surveys should be implemented and evaluated on a regular basis.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of the action plan and should not be regarded as an end in itself. The Partnership needs to carry out systematic evaluation to find out whether the objectives of the programme are being met, the effects of measures and actions, and what more needs to be done to ensure the programme's success.

Innovative schemes

While there is obvious value in using tried and tested practices, these may not be appropriate to capture the interest and involvement of young people or coaches. The programme offers the opportunity for innovation and Partnerships will need to explore imaginative approaches that may involve a degree of risk taking to access, attract and retain key priority groups through the programme.

Section Three

Developing sports equity action plans

Introduction

The following guidance comprises a series of questions or prompts for Partnerships to consider further development of the planning process for sports equity within the context of the Partnership Services Framework. The **prompts** are followed by a number of suggestions to help Partnerships assess whether **further action** is needed to develop equity action plans on an annual basis that demonstrate their ability to achieve the stated outcomes.

1. Commitment to sports equity.

Equity as part of the culture of the Partnership

The culture of the Partnership, though invisible, determines the way it works and what will succeed or fail. The culture is the way in which things are done, the behaviour and attitudes that are accepted within it. The main aim of the Partnership's work towards equity must be to ensure that equity is completely integrated in everything it does.

Prompt

Has the sports equity policy statement been written with the audience in mind?

Further action

- Check that the sports equity policy statement includes a summary of the Partnership's service aims and its commitment to equity.
- Ensure it is written in plain English and is user friendly.
- Include the sports equity policy statement in promotional material and ensure that it is regularly publicised.

Prompt

Has the Partnership written its own equity policies and procedures or adopted those belonging to the host authority and are they 'owned' by the key partners?

Further Action

- Ensure that policies and procedures have been formally endorsed by the Partnership.
- Make copies of policies and procedures available to staff and volunteers and ensure that they are included in induction programmes.

2. Develop an awareness of sports equity policies at Partnership and local level.

Developing an awareness and understanding of equity is an important part of the Partnership's ongoing work. Education and training is needed to raise awareness, challenge assumptions and develop practical skills.

Prompt

What discussions have taken place with key partners about meeting the key equity objectives?

Further Action

- Ensure regular discussions take place to review the key practices and principles that underpin the equity policy, e.g. how the Partnership intends to develop a programme that empowers local people.
- Explore the need for specific strategies and innovative approaches to work with disadvantaged communities.
- Consider nominating an equity advocate who will ensure that equity is central to the Partnership's work.

Prompt

Has the Partnership developed an induction training programme for staff and volunteers?

Further Action

- Ensure all staff and volunteers receive a formal induction which includes the Partnership's approach to equity, a code of conduct and their legal rights and responsibilities.
- Produce an induction/information pack.

Prompt

How will the Partnership assess training needs and develop a rolling programme to ensure staff and volunteers have a good understanding of equity practices, priority groups and the confidence to meet new challenges?

Further Action

- Consider a range of training programmes that raises awareness, e.g. cultural awareness, disability and gender awareness.
- Provide training to improve skills and competencies, e.g. learning sign language, marketing workshops, communication skills.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme on a regular basis.

3. Commitment to non-discriminatory behaviour by all participants.

The Partnership needs to adopt clear practices and procedures that create an atmosphere where people respect each other and where all talents are used to the full in order to make the Partnership more effective, even those who do not initially fit the established way of doing things.

Prompt

Has the Partnership adopted disciplinary and grievance procedures that cover staff and volunteers?

Further Action

- Ensure that procedures adopted are user friendly and copies are available to staff and volunteers.

Prompt

Has the Partnership adopted a code of conduct that includes discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation? Is the code of conduct linked in to the disciplinary procedure?

Further Action

- Discuss with key partners to agree on the content, considering links with other available codes such as NGB codes of conduct.
- Ensure that the code of conduct is adopted and is signed by staff and volunteers.

Prompt

Has the Partnership adopted a customer care policy that includes a procedure for the public to register complaints or suggestions?

Further Action

- Develop a policy that is user friendly, written in plain English and is widely distributed within the Partnership area.

4. Representation of priority groups on management, sport action and partnership services action groups.

The credibility of the Partnership in the community will depend on what efforts it makes to ensure proper representation on the various management and action groups from priority groups and the communities it serves.

Prompt

Is current representation appropriate and if not how will the Partnership ensure that priority groups are represented in the key decision-making groups in the future?

Further Action

- Explore ways of encouraging people from under-represented groups to join key groups and then set targets.
- Establish contacts with non-sporting organisations, groups and projects, such as local youth groups, women's groups, disability groups, education and health services and faith groups.
- Ensure that the planning group structure is not bureaucratic.
- Consider co-opting individuals or allowing individuals observer status as part of a mentoring programme.
- Monitor the profiles of group membership on a regular basis and take remedial action as necessary.

5. Understanding the social composition of the Partnership area.

Prompt

Does the Partnership have a sound knowledge about the social composition of the local population to help set realistic targets?

What would it be useful to know?

Further Action

- Consider further data collection/ research/ consultation that will build on baseline demographic information to enable the Partnership to develop a comprehensive picture of the local population. As the national census information does not include data about disabled people, there may be a need to commission local research.

6. Develop a programme that meets the sports equity targets of Sport England and the National Governing Bodies.

No two Partnerships are the same. However, certain indicators are particularly important in enabling people to recognise whether the Partnership's practices are based on the principle of equity.

a. Consultation with under-represented groups

Prompt

- Has the Partnership developed relationships with local community groups?
- Does the Partnership recognise the value of consultation as a means of building relationships and trust with priority groups?
- Has the Partnership identified the needs and aspirations, the constraints and barriers for priority groups?

Further Action

- Hold consultation meetings with key partners and community representatives to outline details of the programme and explain how the planning process and delivery timetables will be carried out.
- Establish regular consultation at grass roots level to help build relationships and maintain trust, especially with groups not previously involved in sport.
- Utilise local people from priority groups to assist with consultation activities.
- Set up local consultation meetings with under represented groups, regardless of how small they are, they all matter!

b. Empowering local people

Prompt

- Do key partners recognise the value of empowering local people?
- How does the Partnership intend to involve and support local people in their activities?

Further Action

- Identify potential leaders through outreach work and consulting with local community groups.
- Pilot mentoring programmes and Buddy schemes.

- Set up peer group schemes for young people to take an active role in setting up and running new sports clubs and other activities.

c. Support for coaches and volunteers

Prompt

How does the Partnership recruit coaches and volunteers locally and ensure representation of the local population?

Further Action

- Draw up and maintain a list of local outlets to place job advertisements that will reach under-represented groups.
- Ensure regular marketing to promote the Partnership and its programmes.
- Develop mentoring/ buddy schemes to encourage people to get involved.
- Consider the barriers and constraints that people may face and develop innovative schemes to help remove them.
- Make links with other programmes/initiatives that have a focus on developing coaches/volunteers from priority groups. The Partnership will often be able to provide useful placement/deployment opportunities.

Prompt

What support does the Partnership offer coaches and volunteers?

Further Action

- Develop a volunteer programme that includes training and support networks.
- Provide an opportunity to practice in a supportive environment.
- Prepare job descriptions and job specifications for coaches and conduct regular appraisals.
- Offer incentives to help recruit people from under-represented groups.
- Identify a range of training programmes unrelated to sport that would help to build confidence and leadership skills.
- Publicise the work done by volunteers and coaches through achievement awards.
- Set up a network and facilitate occasional events to share ideas and practice.

d. Programme development

Prompt

What progress has been made in creating opportunities in clubs and coaching/competitive schemes for young people from priority groups?

Further Action

- Involve key partners in regular discussions about how they can work together.
- Audit existing provision and evaluate consultations to help identify existing opportunities.
- Encourage clubs to assess their provision and take actions for improvement.
- Identify the settings that young people feel comfortable in.
- Find out what venues local people consider suitable to meet their specific needs, e.g. accessible venues, good public transport, safe and welcoming venues.
- Reassure parents about issues such as safety, standards of behaviour and cost.
- Introduce pilot schemes that promote fun, fitness and friendship.
- Provide a Code of Conduct for participants.
- Develop specific strategies for the development of opportunities for key priority groups. Ensure that there is positive focus to the work, with specific goals and targets. Build on success.
- Consider establishing groups with a key focus to drive forward some of the equity development work and to consider wider issues. These groups may then be able to become constituted bodies and therefore apply for additional funding from other sources.

Prompt

What further actions do key partners need to take to develop pathways for young people?

Further Action

- Identify any pre-Active Sports work that needs to be done and consider ways of enabling this to take place. Consider links with Awards for All and the School Sports Co-ordinator programme.

- Promote opportunities and clear pathways when taster sessions have been planned.
- Deliver additional training workshops on related areas such as nutrition, sports science and time management.
- Ensure that monitoring systems are in place to evaluate the progression of young people up the player pathway and to identify any issues that may be providing obstacles for progression.

f. Promoting positive role models

Research has shown the promotion of positive role models is an effective practice that encourages people into sport.

Prompt

Has the Partnership identified ways of promoting positive role models to encourage participation and involvement?

Further Action

- Identify and promote local sporting champions from priority groups.
- Involve sporting champions in Partnership events.
- Work with local community groups to develop local coach development programmes.
- Ensure positive and diverse images are available and used in publicity/information materials, at events and venues.

g. Marketing and publicity

Prompt

Is marketing done on an ad hoc basis or is there a marketing strategy in place?

Further Action

- Designate responsibility for marketing and publicity.
- Develop a marketing and publicity strategy that produces good quality information using a variety of methods, e.g. set up links with the local media – newspapers, radio stations and cable TV.
- Promote opportunities, publicise achievements and help keep communities informed of progress.

- Take into account the target group and the nature of the sport/activity when deciding on the content of the message, e.g. fun, social and health benefits or competition.
- Find ways of collecting quality material and images and maintain a media library.
- Organise a workshop to improve media skills.
- Ensure information about the Partnership and its activities can be made available on request in different formats, e.g. large or clear print, Braille or audio tape.

g. Monitoring and evaluation

Prompt

Can the objectives and actions set out in the action plan be measured?

What use has been made of monitoring data to evaluate progress against the key objectives?

Further Action

- Regular monitoring to collect numerical data by gender, disability and ethnic origin of participants, staff and volunteers will help measure set targets.
- Decide who is responsible for data collection, who should be involved in evaluating the data and who acts on the evaluation.
- Pilot schemes or initiatives that are failing to achieve measurable results may need to be changed or discontinued.
- Incorporate the views of participants into the overall monitoring process.
- Set up and maintain a database that includes information about participants, staff and volunteers.

h. Management and accountability

Prompt

Have staff been given responsibility for specific areas of work?

Further Action

- Allocate responsibilities to key staff and agree on a process for reporting progress.
- Hold regular review meetings with key partners to evaluate progress against the action plan.

7. Innovative schemes

Innovation concerns both the provision and the management of the Active Sports Programme and is an activity that breaks new ground, pushing back the boundaries of professional knowledge and practice. Innovation involves professional risk taking, combining the freedom to experiment with the use of proven skills, knowledge and understanding.

Prompt

What discussions have taken place with key partners about the benefits of innovative practices?

Further Action

- Organise a workshop for key partners to explore ideas.
- Think outside the box!
- Liase with other Partnerships to share ideas.

8. Establish a charging policy that is affordable for all participants in the programme.

Each Partnership is confronted with the problem of the costs of participating in sport. In addition to club and activity fees, additional costs including transport, clothing and equipment need to be addressed.

Prompt

To what extent is cost still a barrier?

How much more can the Partnership do to address financial barriers?

Further Action

- Build up mobile equipment and clothing bags.
- Set up a transport fund to subsidise costs.
- Continue to negotiate a reduction in charging fees.
- Access local grant schemes to support talented young people.
- Link into other local sources of funding to support work with key priority groups.

Reviewing action plans

The Partnership Planning group has an important role in reviewing the action plan to ensure delivery, co-ordination and the identification of future priorities. A review of the plan should include the following issues:

- Is the action plan complete?
- Is there sufficient detail to show how the objectives will be achieved?
- Are the critical pathways clear? This involves taking each main objective and working out the secondary objectives so that the sequence of tasks become clear.
- Are the targets and objectives likely to be achieved?
- Are monitoring methods included?
- Are the timescales realistic?
- Is it clear who is accountable for each task?
- Have realistic costings been prepared?

Appendix 1: Sports Equity Policy Statement

Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation Sports Equity Policy Statement

“The Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation, in recognising certain inequalities exist within sport, has an ongoing commitment to treat people fairly. The Council will take positive action to ensure that sports equity is, and continues to be, a fundamental and integral part of all it’s work. This policy statement is supported by specific equity policies, action plans and monitoring systems”.

Appendix 2: Model Equity Policy

Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation Partnership (ECSRP)

Introduction

The ECSRP is committed to the principles and practice of equity. The ECSRP recognises that certain groups of people in the community have been affected in the past by disadvantage and discrimination and may still be denied both employment opportunities and access to sporting and recreational activities.

Our commitment is to confront and eliminate discrimination in all of its activities and encourage the involvement of everyone in the community. ECSRP will not discriminate, or in any way treat anyone less favourably, on grounds such as age, colour, disability, ethnic origin or nationality, marital status, sex, sexuality, social class or Trade Union membership.

Legal Requirements

The ECSRP is required by law not to discriminate against its employees and recognises its legal obligations under the following Acts:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Implementation

a. Information

A copy of this policy will be given to staff and volunteers employed or involved in ECSRP's activities.

b. Employment

We will take steps to achieve an ability-based workforce reflects the local population by advertising job vacancies as widely as possible to encourage applicants from all backgrounds. We will also encourage all sports organisations within the partnership boundaries to do likewise in their recruitment of paid staff and volunteers.

We will take steps to ensure that no job applicant is placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions which are not necessary to the performance of the job or which constitute unfair discrimination.

c. Standards of behaviour

We will ensure that any discrimination, workplace abuse or harassment of any type is not tolerated and will be met with appropriate disciplinary action.

d. Access to services

The ECSRP will take a planned approach to ensure that facilities and services are accessible to all. Through the sports programmes we aim to:

- Take account of any existing inequalities in our planning process and through consultation with communities and other organisations, take necessary steps and action to address them.
- Ensure resources are fairly allocated to reflect the sporting interests and specific needs of all sections of the community.
- Make promotional information available in different formats, such as large print, Braille and on tape. Information should also be available in languages other than English if required.

We will investigate all complaints from members of the public promptly and thoroughly.

e. Positive Action

The ECSRP may:

- Take positive action measures with regard to employment practices under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- Take positive action and introduce special measures for any of the priority groups to enable their full involvement in the services provided.

f. Training and Education

The ECSRP will provide training for all staff and volunteers to enable them to be aware of the needs of the diverse communities they serve. The ECSRP will also ensure that staff and volunteers receive training in relation to Health and Safety and Child Protection.

g. Monitoring and Evaluation

The ECSRP Management Group will ensure that monitoring and evaluation systems are designed and implemented to ensure this policy is carried out as intended.

h. Accountability

The ECSRP Management Group accepts responsibility for implementing the policy and will provide regular reports on the Sports Equity Action Plan.

All staff and volunteers involved in the activities of the Partnership are required to comply with this policy.

i. Disciplinary and grievance procedures

To safeguard individual rights under this policy, an employee who believes that he/she has been subjected to inequitable treatment within the scope of the policy may raise the matter through the grievance procedure.

Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any employee who breaches the ECSRP's equity policy.

Appendix 3: Reference

Sport Action Zones Summary Report-Establishing the Zones. July 2001. Malcolm Tungent, Sport England.

Achieving Racial Equality: A standard for sport. 2000. Sporting Equals.

National Women's Action Plan and Guidance Notes. 2000. Womens Sports Foundation.

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'So, What's New?' Innovation in Youth Work. Survey findings 2001. Bryan Menton. National Youth Agency.

Developing and Delivering Sports Equity: A report for the Sport across Staffordshire Partnership. 2001.

Sports Equity The Guiding Principle: Policy Guidelines For Voluntary Organisations. Eastern Council for Sport and Recreation.1994