

Contents

1 Introduction

2Background information about system partners

What does system change mean in practice?

What are we learning?

5What's needed now?

6Sport England's response to this report







INTRODUCTION

01



About this document

This is the second report sharing learning from the evaluation of Sport England's system partner portfolio investment.

It builds on the interim findings report published in October 2024.

Its purpose is to share a summary of the findings that are relevant to people working in a range of roles within the system partner organisations. It is designed to:

- Share back what system partners have been reporting. It is intending to show how their contributions to the evaluation are informing the findings and recommendations for Sport England.
- **Share learning** from some system partners, to bring some of the findings to life.
- **Prompt reflection** on the implications and inspire system partners to learn from the experiences of others to inform their next steps.

Definitions used in this document:

- 'Findings' examine the system partner portfolio as a whole, to help Sport England better understand how its investment has worked, and what could be improved.
- **'Learning**' presents lessons learnt by some system partners when delivering their work, to help others reflect on their approaches.

It is based on data and insights generated through the system partner evaluation and learning programme, being delivered by Ipsos, NPC and academics based at Sheffield Hallam University.

In particular it draws on:

- **Interviews with 113 system partners** providing an opportunity to explore specific experiences in depth.
- Three workshops with a sample of system partners to develop 'pen portraits' to illustrate different stories of change across the portfolio.
- Two workshops and 10 interviews with Sport England to explore the interim evaluation findings and experiences designing and delivering the investment.
- reporting and the evaluation team's learning from interactions with system partners through the wider evaluation and learning programme's capacity and capability-building activities.







Background and context to the evaluation

This timeline illustrates how this evaluation fits with the Uniting the Movement strategy.

In 2021, Sport England launched Uniting the Movement a 10-year vision to 'transform lives and communities through sport and physical activity.'

... its 10-year vision spanning to **2031**.

In **2022**, Sport England invested in over 130 **System Partners** for up to 5 years, to realise the Uniting the Movement vision.

In October **2024**, the first **interim evaluation report** was produced.

This focused on the ways in which Sport England has worked with system partners, and the change it has started to create.

In a March **2025** a **second evaluation report was produced**to build on the earlier findings.

The evaluation is increasingly aiming to focus on the change that the investment has contributed to for the wider sector and for communities.

In 2023, Sport England

commissioned an evaluation of

this investment.







Key findings and learning presented in this report

Key findings



The investment into a diverse portfolio of organisations is enabling them to play different roles that collectively contribute to changing the sport and physical activity system.



Short-term changes being enabled by the investment include greater focus on decision-making, policy and system change, and more open and collaborative working within system partner organisations and with their local networks.



Staff and volunteer capacity constraints within system partners and their partner organisations are a potential barrier to progress.



Even with the system partner funding from Sport England, there are funding constraints affecting sport and physical activity delivery.



The culture change to realise the vision of Uniting the Movement takes time, and political change has affected progress.



A lack of consistency in how Sport England manage the system partner portfolio and other programmes is creating duplication and there are missed opportunities for collaboration.

Key learning



Collaboration can help tackle capacity challenges.



Generating and improving insight and data can help to prioritise focus, and make the case to other funders.



By giving system partners space to innovate, and recruit and develop staff, it has increased their capacity to start or accelerate their culture change journey.



Ten recommendations are identified for Sport England to improve consistency and create more opportunities for collaboration.







BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE 'SYSTEM PARTNER' PORTFOLIO

02



What does it mean to be a system partner?

- Since 2022, Sport England has invested about **£600 million** into **137 organisations** in the sport and physical activity sector called 'system partners'. The investment provides **long-term funding** (up to 5 years) for delivery and system change activities. The investment also includes **governance**, **safeguarding and EDI compliance requirements** that all system partners have to meet.
- The programme design and reporting expectations are intended to foster an open, trusting, flexible and collaborative relation ship between Sport England and system partners.
- There is incredible **diversity in the type and size of organisation** within the system partner umbrella. Organisations have different geographic footprints, operating structures and remits, and range in size from having three full-time members of staff to large organisations of 500+. The types of organisations funded include:
 - **42 Active Partnerships**, a national network of organisations that take a place-based approach to remove barriers to movement, physical activity and sport within their local communities (average £3.3m per organisation).
 - **52 National Governing Bodies (NGBs)**, the organisations that govern a sport at UK, GB or home country level. They are focused on increasing participation levels in their sports through influencing positive experiences (average £5.4m per organisation).
 - **43 'national partners'**, which encompasses a wide range of organisations including national disability specialist organisations, network, membership and policy influencing organisations that work at different levels and in different collaborations to remove barriers to physical activity (average £4.6m per organisation).







Why has Sport England adopted this approach?

- The investment is designed to support **Uniting the Movement, Sport England's strategy to** support everyone in England to access the **benefits of sport and physical activity.**
- The investment emerged from the context of:
 - **Falling rates of physical activity** attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. The decline in physical activity was not spread equally across society, resulting in an increase in inequalities in sport and physical activity participation.
 - Financial pressures as a result of falling revenues for many sport organisations and the rising costs of living.
 - A historically **disjointed sector**, with organisations often working in silos and in competition with each other.
 - Safeguarding crises in sport, and wider societal concerns about women's safety and racial injustice.
- The investment therefore aimed to **unite and support the sector** through longer-term financial stability, a shared focus on the Uniting the Movement strategy (with four key outcomes focused on tackling inequalities, increasing physical activity, decreasing physical inactivity and positive experiences for children and young people), and a more **collaborative way of working** with and between Sport England and its partners.
- The system partner investment provided an opportunity for Sport England to better align to different funding streams and funding objectives. It encompasses funding for **system change activities** to tackle inequalities; **governing activities** (specifically for NGBs and their partners to improve the governance of their sport); **delivery programmes** that align with UTM and **talent pathways** (which is specific to NGBs).







WHAT DOES SYSTEM CHANGE MEAN IN PRACTICE, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SPORT AND PHYSICAL SECTOR?

03



A portfolio of diverse organisations working in different ways to achieve a shared goal

The investment into a diverse portfolio of organisations is enabling them to play different roles that **collectively contribute** to changing the sport and physical activity system. The implication of this finding is that **no system partner can be expected to change the system on its own**; instead, the cooperation and interplay of organisations across the sector, each playing a distinct role, can lead to the expected change.

The different roles identified from the analysis relate to the different activities being funded, in relation to system change, governing, delivery and talent. They are classified as:

- A governance, safeguarding, EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), and workforce improver role for system partners to improve their own practice, or support or influence others to improve theirs.
- An **influencing role**, focusing on issue-based, policy, or place-based influencing.
- A sport or programme **delivery role**, which involves growing sport or programmes to under-represented communities, or diversifying and strengthening talent pathways.
- A **local connector role**, involving understanding local places, building stronger connections and collaborative relationships within them, and guiding activities and funding where most needed.









What do these roles mean for how system partners create change?

Ultimately the change that Sport England is intending to bring about is **reducing physical inactivity**, **reducing inequalities in physical inactivity** and **increasing physical activity**. Some of the shorter-term changes observed to date include:

| Finding: short-term changes | | Learning: system partner examples |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| > | Greater focus on influencing decision-making , policy and system change | For example, Active Partnerships are working with local health services to prescribe physical activity; National Partners are supporting national policy around disabled people and sport. |
| > | Increased resources to improve organisational capacity and capabilities | For example, Active Partnerships have improved analytical and evaluation skills to inform decision-making; NGBs have updated training and processes to ensure their clubs deliver safe sports. |
| > | A shift in how system partners understand and think about their contribution to the system | For example, some National Partners and Active Partnerships are shifting away from delivery and focusing on influencing decision-making across local systems. |
| > | Use of evidence and insights to inform decision-making | For example, NGBs are undertaking research to better understand barriers to sports participation for certain communities; Active Partnerships are using public health data to understand local needs. |
| > | More open and collaborative working within system partner organisations, with their local networks, and between system partners | For example, NGBs are forming new partnerships with non-traditional sporting organisations such as faith groups; Active Partnerships are connecting into local government strategy boards. |







WHAT ARE WE LEARNING?

04

The evaluation findings have been grouped into the following four themes, to bring together learning about how system partners are navigating different challenges to achieving their long-term goals. These relate to:

- Staff capacity
- 2. Sport and physical activity delivery funding
- 3. Culture
- 4. Consistency



1. Staff capacity

The challenge: The evaluation findings suggest staff and volunteer capacity constraints within system partners and their partner organisations are a potential barrier to progress.

Capacity is an issue across the sector, particularly for smaller and medium-sized organisations with relatively **broad remits**. For example, for small NGBs that work nationally across a network of clubs achieving compliance to the governance standards can take up a significant amount of time for some organisations, **leaving limited resources for collaboration and partnership building.** For Active Partnerships, staff may spend significant time navigating the needs of diverse stakeholder groups within their places, complicated by changing local political structures.

The capacity constraints of other organisations in the sector acutely affect system partners' abilities to influence change. This includes the **capacity and staff turnover among partner organisations**, the reliance on volunteers and recruiting and training qualified coaches.

The response: System partners are navigating this challenge through greater collaboration.

The investment has provided system partners with additional staff capacity to focus on **supporting**, **enabling** and **increasing capabilities of others in the system**. By having stronger connections with partner organisations, they are able to work better together to better understand and engage under-represented communities and influence how other organisations working nationally and locally can align to Uniting the Movement.

- See the 'pen portrait'* example of how a **small NGB looking to diversify their sport** has invested in specific roles and is focused on more collaborative working to deliver joint activity in place.
- See the case study of how <u>Active Essex</u> are allocating funding to increase the capacity of local partner organisations.

^{*}A 'pen portrait' is not a case study of one specific system partner but is drawn from data from multiple system partners to provide an illustrative example of key themes and trends from system partners of a specific type.

A 'pen portrait'* of a **National Governing Body** (NGB) looking to diversify their sport through collaborative working







SP **INVESTMENT**



MECHANISM(S) OF CHANGE



SHORT TERM OUTCOME



NGB is perceived to be lacking diversity. Their key aims are to grow their sport, whilst diversifying participation and improving perceptions of their sport and who takes part.

NGBs have established

networks and influence across the sector. They govern the

delivery of sport and aim to

increase participation, which in

turn can increase

physical activity levels.

NGBs vary in size but capacity,

workforce challenges, and

financial constraints including

around access to facilities are

shared challenges.



The investment has increased focus on diversifying sports to contribute to Uniting the Movement.

The investment has helped create internal momentum for this NGB to transform their sport, building the drive for diversity and inclusion into their organisational goals and strategy.

This NGB has invested into their comms and marketing strategy to reach more diverse communities and attract new partners.

The focus on place within systems thinking is a **new way of working** for this NGB. They are now seeing their role as one to facilitate localised networks.



The longer-term investment is creating time and space to test and learn approaches.

The ability to invest into organisational capacity and capability, including through roles specific to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, is helping contribute towards the drive for diversity.

> New systems and tools are improving this NGB's capabilities.

The investment focus on collaborative working has helped with some of the workload associated with place-based work for this NGB.

This NGB is cascading the learning from new comms and marketing strategies across the club networks so that they can better promote their sport to diverse audiences.

Local clubs for this NGB have more confidence in the collaborative ways of working and have seen the benefits to the wider sport.

This NGB has developed strong collaborative working with NPs and other NGBs to deliver joint activity in place.

This NGB has a better understanding of delivery of their sport in communities and connectivity with non-traditional facilities through creating specific roles working in place.



© Ipsos | Sport England NGB Pen Portrait | June 2025











^{*}A 'pen portrait' is not a case study of one specific system partner but is drawn from data from multiple system partners to provide an illustrative example of key themes and trends from system partners of a specific type.

Active Essex are using the system partner investment to invest in the capacity and capabilities of local organisations to deliver targeted physical activity provision

Active Essex is one of the 43 Active Partnerships across England. They are hosted within the public health team of Essex County Council.

The system partner funding has enabled Active Essex to dedicate significant time and resources to developing a network of 'locally trusted organisations'. These organisations apply their expertise and community connections to ensure local physical activity provision meets specific needs of the community.

Active Essex has provided longer-term funding of up to three years for some of these organisations, and provided targeted training and support to increase their skills and capacity. They also bring these organisations together in workshops and other forums to share learning and encourage a collaborative approach, and use their county-level connections and knowledge to connect these local organisations into the wider system.

This new collaborative way of working as a local system is shifting the focus from competition for funding to a shared vision of improving the community's health and wellbeing.



"We're building relationships. We're understanding what their needs are. [...] We can be the link between them and public health, or them and their local ICB, or their local doctor's surgery, because we're in a position to have the relationships [...] that a locally-trusted organisation wouldn't be." Active Essex Relationship Manager

You can read a longer version of this case study on the <u>Sport England website</u>.







2. Sport and physical activity delivery funding

The challenge: While the findings suggest the shift into a system-focused influencing and local connector role is enabling the short-term outcomes, there are strategic implications on the funding available for delivery. Even with the system partner funding from Sport England, there are funding constraints across the sector affecting sport and physical activity delivery.

Increased **staff and other operational costs**, and **financial pressures elsewhere in the system** are limiting the investment capacity of local authorities, health and care organisations and voluntary sector organisations for physical activity initiatives.

The increasing costs of quality and suitable **facilities** is a challenge for many, particularly for NGBs that do not own their own facilities.

Some system partners are more reliant on Sport England's system partner funding than others. This results in a **diversity of other funders and stakeholder interests** which can lead to competing priorities influencing where system partners focus their efforts.

The response: System partners are navigating this challenge by using the investment to generate and improve insight and data which is used to prioritise their focus, and make the case to other funders.

➤ See <u>the example of an Active Partnership</u> that has used their evidence to generate additional income for delivery activities and influence the decisions of others.

"In theory the NHS and local authorities should be really strong partners. They are both unbelievably cash strapped, and they barely have the time to do the ['must do' services], let alone engaging in the 'nice to do' stuff of improving the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve."

National Partner







SP **INVESTMENT**



(②)

MECHANISM(S) **OF CHANGE**



SHORT TERM OUTCOME



This AP receives System Partner investment funding but not Place investment funding.

The **UTM** strategy provides **common** goals and narrative for the sector, bringing to the forefront the opportunity for tackling inequalities.

Local system priorities and other funding opportunities shape the focus of delivery in their local place. This includes from their county council to deliver schools and holiday programmes and public health funding for a drug and alcohol recovery programme.

The SP investment allowed them to shift to a systemic role, with more dedicated and specialist capacity to influence the wider system.

Long-term investment with reduced demand on reporting outputs.

Investment in insight capabilities, generating research and harnessing grounded insights from delivery.



Shifting mindsets and capabilities of staff to take on a more strategic, system-focus approach.

Strong, trusting relationships with local partners (as they are no longer in competition, provide evidence and offers of support and opportunities to co-design targeted programmes).

Freedom to experiment and be more innovative.

Convincing evidence base to influence partners locally.

Improved alignment with local priorities and agendas. By forming new and deeper partnerships with organisations beyond the traditional sports sector and influencing the wider system, they are being increasingly recognised as key partners for tackling inactivity and promoting health and wellbeing.

Increased focus on tackling inequalities, moving away from a more generic approach to those experiencing greatest inequalities.



Wellbeing **University** Research Centre



lpsos













3. Culture

The challenge: The culture change to realise the vision of Uniting the Movement takes time, and political change has affected progress.

While Uniting the Movement strategy is reported to be providing a clear mandate to prioritise inequalities and focus on place-based approaches, system partners recognise that **changing the culture and mindsets of staff and partners will take time**. Local and national government changes have **created uncertainty** and affected the pace of change.

Internally to Sport England, expectations around performance management of the investment vary across stakeholders. The shift away from quantitative reporting and stricter performance management has been welcomed by some enabling partners to set their own goals to meet their own specific needs but it is recognised as being more difficult to demonstrate the value of the investment to executive board and DCMS.

The response: The investment has increased the profile and capacity of system partners to start or accelerate this culture change journey, giving space to innovate and recruit and develop staff with the relevant expertise.

- See the example of how <u>a national disability-specialist</u> <u>organisation</u> is influencing and working with others to reduce participation barriers for disabled people.
- See the example of <u>how the **FA**</u> has used the system partner funding to invest in coaching programmes.

"People are being encouraged to innovate and try things and to learn as they go. And so, there isn't a culture of fear, where if you fail you're going to be hammered for not having achieved a certain target."

Active Partnership

Version 11 Public

SP MECHANISM(S) SHORT TERM CONTEXT A 'pen portrait'* of a **INVESTMENT OF CHANGE** OUTCOME disability National Partner (NP) working with others to increase participation of disabled Louder voice for NP and, in turn, NP has greater credibility within the Improved collaboration between NP Perceived lack of NPs have **specific** people in sport. disabled people. sector and beyond. organisations and a range of organisations at expertise on, and with the knowdifferent levels. links into. **how** to deliver disabled SPA for disabled communities. The investment has driven an people. increase in demand for NP NP is asked more frequently to support expertise, advice and input. other System Partners. Perceived lack of proactivity from NP is a relatively the sector in small Shifted the role of NP within the system providing NP knows there is a greater need for organisation. Increased capacity of NP for opportunities for moving from delivery to more systemic them to influence at the national level. systemic-focused work. disabled people. focused activities. Improved coordination and strategic NP has a collective ambition to Facilitated discussions on collective use NP plays crucial Perceived lack of thinking between NP and like minded establish joint projects that will bring of SE funding to address key issues for role in informing inclusivity and organisations. strategic disabled communities. about change. representation decision making for disabled across the sector people within the affecting disabled SPA workforce. people. Sheffield Advanced Wellbeing © Ipsos | Sport England DNP Pen Portrait | March 2025 |



University Research Centre





The FA are using the system partner investment to focus on supporting more diverse talent pathways and coaching offers

The FA is a large and well established NGB for the most popular sport in the country. The system partner investment, while a small proportion of the FA's revenue, has been prioritised on supporting the women and girls and disability talent pathways, while also developing the grassroots and coaching offer. This aims to influence an inclusive culture and opportunities for more diverse participation in football.

For example, they have developed a programme targeting girls aged 12-14 called Squad. Squad aims to reduce the dropout of girls' participation in football observed in teenage years and offer an opportunity for girls to play football in a non-competitive environment, making the game more casual and fun.

They also have a 'Discover My Talent' programme for seeking out talented players. This involves working with a wider range of partners, including traditional football partners but also community organisations and charitable partners delivering football to increase opportunities for identifying talented players from communities underrepresented within the national team. The FA has increased the coaching workforce working on the talent pathway to widen their reach into different communities.



"Without the investment from Sport England, we wouldn't work in this way. We just wouldn't have the means to do it. We would go back to a traditional model of being data driven in a professional club academy system." Head of Women's Talent, The FA

You can read a longer version of this case study on the **Sport England website**.







4. Consistency

The challenge: a lack of consistency in how Sport England manage the system partner portfolio and other programmes is creating duplication and missed collaboration opportunities.

Sport England staff and system partners report that the system partner portfolio investment is facilitating greater collaboration, internally within Sport England and with system partners, raising organisational standards and understanding about each system partner's role.

However, System partners report **different experiences** of engaging with Sport England, which is the result of how relationships with different organisations are managed across different teams at Sport England. System partners also report an issue with **duplication and lack of connection** to wider activities across Sport England and with other funders, including duplication and **different timeframes** for reporting. This is impeding collaboration across the portfolio and increasing demands on staff time.

The response: the evaluation has identified ten recommendations to Sport England to improve consistency and create more opportunities for collaboration.

See the next section of the report for the recommendations to Sport England.

"There's the timing and the duplication of documentation. We'll get something from Sport England, but then there'll be something similar from UK Sport... [The] timings of requests for information [could be] betteraligned."

National Governing Body

WHAT'S NEEDED NOW?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPORT ENGLAND, AND QUESTIONS FOR SYSTEM PARTNERS

05



Summary of the findings and implications for Sport England

The evaluation has started to refine the 'story' of the system partner investment to date, providing greater clarity on the mechanisms that contribute to change, and the different roles that system partners play to realise the Uniting the Movement vision.

The key finding is that different system partners play different roles that can collectively contribute to changing the sport and physical activity system. No system partner can be expected to change the whole sport and physical activity sector, and population-level outcomes, on its own. It is the collaboration of organisations across the sector, each playing a distinct role, that can trigger the expected change.

The implication of the learning about these different roles should help:

- Individual system partners to better understand their place in the system and their role in creating change.
- Sport England better understand the role of different system partners, and better support them to contribute to system change.
- Sport England better describe the investment to a range of internal and external audiences.

Identifying recommendations and next steps to build on this learning

- The evaluation has helped identify **considerations and recommendations for Sport England** to respond to the findings. These are listed on the next pages.
- To prompt thinking from **system partners** on what they could do, and what support they would need, to respond to the findings, we have included **'thought starters'** to help them to consider what they could do to better influence change and realise the potential of the system partner network.







What Sport England can do for all system partners

Finding: The different roles that system partners have within the portfolio has implications on how they can work together. As the security of the five-year funding comes to its final two years, Sport England should consider the implications for system partners, the progress they are making towards a more strategic, system-focused approach, and actions needed from Sport England to maximise the benefits of the expertise and passion of all partners.

The recommendations for Sport England are to:

- Foster collaboration across system partners, based on their specific roles.
- 2. Continue providing long-term funding and visibility.
- 3. Continue providing training, support and guidance around system thinking.
- 4. Clarify the role of system partners supporting others to meet the investment requirements (for example, around safeguarding) to ensure there is no overlap or gap in provision and to prevent competition or tensions.



Thought-starters for system partners

- Which other system partners could Sport England help you connect with? What are the potential barriers to fostering new collaborations?
- Which system partners may be able to support your organisation to meet the investment requirements?
- What do you understand the value of system thinking to be in your work? What would you like to understand about system thinking?







What Sport England can do for system partners with an influencing role

Finding: Many system partners have an influencing role – focused on issue-based, policy or place-based influencing. Some felt that Sport England could collaborate more closely with them to tackle specific challenges to increasing participation of disabled people, and ensure relevant policy insights from system partners are amplified and shared across the portfolio and the wider system.



- Further support Disability National Partners to increase participation of disabled people in sport and physical activity.
- 6. Support system partners with a policy-influencing role to better navigate the sport and physical activity sector.



Thought-starters for system partners with an influencing role

To influence policy change in your sector:

- What actions do you need to take?
- What support do you need?
- Who else do you need to work with?







What Sport England can do for system partners with a delivery role

Finding: Many system partners have a sport or programme delivery role, which involves growing sport or programmes to under-represented communities, or diversifying and strengthening talent pathways. This delivery activity often sits alongside other activities related to their influencing or local connector roles.

Some Active Partnerships and National Partners highlight the importance of delivery funding to develop insight, gain traction with local partners and engage underrepresented groups in new ways, but can find it challenging to access additional delivery funding. Other system partners (specifically some NGBs) are struggling to make progress on all process and culture changes alongside increased costs of delivery.

The recommendations for Sport England are to:

- 7. Recognise the importance of sport and programme delivery to create change across the sport and physical activity system.
- 8. Reflect on different sports' potential to realise the UTM vision, and the implications of this for the investment.



Thought-starters for system partners with a delivery role

- ➤ How does, or how could, your delivery approach interact with, influence, or respond to the wider system to create change?
- ➤ How do you, or could you, use insights from delivery to influence wider change?
- How closely aligned is your sport to the Uniting the Movement vision, and what are the implications of that?







What Sport England can do for system partners with a local connector role

Finding: Many system partners (predominantly Active Partnerships) have a local connector role, involving understanding local places, building stronger connections and collaborative relationships within them, and guiding activities and funding where most needed.

System partners working are working within complex local systems with rapidly changing political and funding landscape. How these system partners are working in response to the unique contexts of their local places means they are becoming increasingly diverse as a network.

The recommendations for Sport England are to consider how to:

- 9. Provide consistency and stability amid local change.
- 10. Evolve the Sport England and Active Partnership networks to respond to the increasing diversity across the portfolio.



Thought-starters for system partners with a local connector role

What support do you want from others within the system partner network to support place-based activities?







SPORT ENGLAND'S RESPONSE TO THIS REPORT

THE FOLLOWING SECTION REPRESENTS SPORT ENGLAND'S VIEWS ON THE EVALUATION FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

06





Sport England's response: what we learnt

Strong support for the system partner approach

The evaluation confirms that the system partner model is valued and effective. It enables collaboration, shared learning, and a more connected approach to tackling inequalities in sport and physical activity.

Clear alignment with Uniting the Movement

The work being done by partners is strongly aligned with the goals and principles of Uniting the Movement, particularly in addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusive practices.

Honest and constructive feedback

The findings reflect both achievements and areas for improvement. We appreciate the transparency and will use this feedback to strengthen our approach.

Pen portraits provide rich insight

The inclusion of pen portraits brought the evaluation to life, offering a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and impact of the work on the ground.

Long-term funding enables systemic change

Sustained investment is understandably seen as critical. The evaluation reinforces that long-term funding supports deeper, more meaningful change across the system.









Sport England's response: what we will do

Inform strategic conversations

The findings will shape upcoming discussions with our new CEO and inform a key Sport England Board session in September, helping to set future direction.

Improve coordination and planning

We will better manage the scheduling of events and engagements to avoid clashes and will introduce a shared calendar to support planning.

Strengthen partner connections, collaborations and learning

We will continue to support mechanisms like the shared Teams channel to help partners connect, collaborate, share learning as well as highlighting great collaboration. We are also increasing opportunities for peer learning through a new online learning platform (Learnworld) and other knowledge exchanges, including our continued peer learning sessions for partners in July and beyond.

Invest in skills and collaboration

Ongoing investment will support training in systems thinking and leadership. We will provide further online resources and support leaders through the recently launched Leading the Movement. We will also continue to back system partners who help others build collaborative capacity.

Plan for the future

Insights from this evaluation are already informing our future implementation plan and investment strategy. We will share more later this year to support your planning.









Sport England's response: what partners can do

Encourage ongoing impact sharing

We ask all partners to continue sharing evidence of impact, especially where it aligns with Uniting the Movement through the evaluation and reporting. This will be vital as it continues to be important that we can demonstrate the value of working in this way and have compelling evidence and insight to support our shared mission and vision.

Encourage partner-led collaboration

We ask all partners to create new, continue and deepen the way they collaborate with others, creating shared spaces and goals on the things that matter most and share the learning around to other partners.







Please share your feedback on this report or ask any questions.

You can contact us via: SPEvaluationLearning@lpsos.com

