

**An Evaluation of the Junior Club Development  
Pilot Programme in Scotland**  
Research Digest no. 98

*A research study for **sportscotland** undertaken  
by*

Vaga Associates

Published by:

© **sportscotland**  
Caledonia House, South Gyle  
Edinburgh, EH12 9DQ  
Tel: 0131 317 7200  
[www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)

ISBN 1 85060 463 0  
Price £5  
2004

***sportscotland** is the trading name of the Scottish Sports Council*

A copy of this report is available from **sportscotland** (Price £5) and is also available in pdf. format on the **sportscotland** website at:

[www.sportscotland.org.uk](http://www.sportscotland.org.uk)

# Contents

## Page

1	<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
1	1.1	The Junior Club Development Pilot Programme (JCDPP)
1	1.2	Aims and Objectives of the Junior Club Development Pilot Programme
2	1.3	Supporting Clubs through the JCDPP
2	1.4	Club Commitment to the JCDPP
3	<b>2</b>	<b>Aims and Objectives of the Study</b>
3	2.1	Evaluation Approach
4	<b>3</b>	<b>Evaluation Findings</b>
4	3.1	Approaches Used to Support Clubs
5	3.2	Support Provided to Clubs
7	3.3	Impact of the JCDPP on Clubs
9	3.4	Other Issues
9	<b>4</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations</b>
10	4.1	Conclusions
11	4.2	Recommendations



# 1 Introduction

In 2004, **sportscotland** appointed Vaga Associates to undertake a retrospective evaluation of the Junior Club Development Pilot Programme (JCDPP). This report summarises the findings of the study, which was completed in August 2004.

## 1.1 The Junior Club Development Pilot Programme (JCDPP)

In 2000, **sportscotland** launched the JCDPP, a three-year, £100,000 pilot programme to assist 40 clubs in 9 sports and disability sport improve opportunities for young people. In total, clubs in 16 local authorities were involved in the programme.

The sports enrolled at the beginning of the pilot included: athletics; basketball; cricket; disability sport; football; hockey; netball; shinty; and swimming. These sports were selected because **sportscotland** Youth Development Managers (YDMs) were available to administer the pilot for their sports.

Following the appointment of new **sportscotland** Youth Development Managers, a number of badminton clubs, women's rugby clubs and women's football clubs joined in year two of the pilot.

Although 40 clubs were initially enrolled, not all clubs completed the pilot - four sports (athletics, cricket and women's football, women's rugby) and 13 clubs failed to complete the programme. This was due to the departure of **sportscotland** Youth Development Managers in some sports, and competing priorities.

## 1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Junior Club Development Pilot Programme

The original aim of the Junior Club Development Pilot Programme, as presented in supporting documentation, was to:

- Demonstrate models of good practice and to highlight the barriers that may prevent clubs from achieving success.

Further objectives of the JCDPP were to:

- Attempt to raise awareness of what clubs can offer young people in their local community.
- Attempt to integrate the pilot programme with existing governing body and/or local authority Junior Club Development programme.

However, these original aims and objectives were somewhat confusing and they did not adequately describe the aims of objectives as understood by those involved in the delivery of the programme. Over the course of the Programme, supporting documentation presents amended aims and objectives. A more accurate reflection of the aim of the JCDPP was to:

- Explore ways in which clubs can be supported to offer quality, fun, and safe sport opportunities to young people.

More specifically, further objectives were to:

- Encourage clubs to adopt more positive attitudes to planning opportunities for young people.
- Identify the barriers affecting a club's ability to offer quality, fun, and safe sport opportunities to young people.
- Provide support to clubs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative functions.
- Make clubs aware of, and encourage the adoption of, good practice.
- Improve the delivery of activities for young people.
- Encourage the development of links between clubs and their local authority.

### 1.3 Supporting Clubs through the JCDPP

Clubs selected for the JCDPP received help with the following:

- Planning, developing and designing club programmes for young people.
- Developing training programmes for club members willing to work with young people.
- Establishing and/or building upon the relationship between clubs and their local authority.

In addition to the professional support from **sportscotland** YDMs and Sport Development Officers (SDOs) from local authorities and governing bodies, each club was also provided with a grant ranging between £500 - £1000 per year to assist clubs implement changes.

### 1.4 Club Commitment to the JCDPP

Clubs interested in participating in the programme were invited to submit a proposal about how they would like to improve their programme of activity for young people.

The clubs that were chosen to take part in the pilot agreed to:

- Provide an environment that is open and welcoming to young people.
- Develop a meaningful, well-organised and progressive programme of activity for young people.
- Identify and train suitably qualified leaders, teachers and coaches to work with young people.

Most of the clubs selected for the programme were already known to demonstrate a commitment to developing young people.

## 2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the evaluation was to:

- Examine the impact of the Junior Club Development Pilot Programme on supporting sports clubs to develop opportunities for young people;
- Identify evidence of good practice in developing clubs;
- Examine the effectiveness of **sportscotland**'s management and co-ordination of the pilot programme; and
- Make recommendations for the future development of clubs in Scotland.

More precisely, the study should:

- Established whether there is perceived to be any change to the environment of participating clubs.
- Established whether the programme has improved the delivery of activity to young people.
- Established whether the structure of clubs is perceived to be stronger as a result of the programme.
- Explored the importance of support provided by local authority development officers to the clubs.
- Assessed the role played by **sportscotland** in the Junior Club Development Pilot Programme.

### 2.1 Evaluation Approach

The evaluation included:

- Desk study of relevant policy papers and monitoring reports.
- A review of five sports involved in the JCDPP, including badminton, basketball, netball, swimming and volleyball.
- A postal survey of all clubs in the JCDPP (44% response rate achieved) and local authorities involved (2 responses received).
- Two workshops with members of **sportscotland**'s Youth Sport Team.

### **3 Evaluation Findings**

This section presents some of the key findings of the evaluation, including findings on the approaches used to support clubs, the nature of the support provided to clubs and the impact of the JCDPP on clubs.

#### **3.1 Approaches Used to Support Clubs**

Although the JCDPP was set up as a national programme to assist clubs with the development of opportunities for young people, it was clear that the approaches used to support clubs differed between sports.

##### **3.1.1 Selection of Clubs for the JCDPP**

In general, the governing bodies played an important role in the selection of clubs for the programme. Those interviewed for the evaluation were of the opinion that the clubs selected were perceived as good with juniors, were geographically well placed to develop in their area or had the facilities to do so.

Sports used different methods for identifying clubs for involvement in the JCDPP. In one sport an invitation was extended to all clubs to apply to take part, while in other sports clubs were identified and approached directly. However, the selection processes were not clearly documented and many clubs involved in the case studies were not clear why they were included in the programme.

In swimming it was the local authority SDO that made the approach to be involved in the JCDPP. This resulted in six clubs from the same geographic area being involved in the programme. In other sports, many of the clubs were spread around the country.

##### **3.1.2 Implementation of the JCDPP**

The approaches used to support clubs were very different across the participating sports. The YDMs for each sport were not required to use a standard approach to the delivery of the programme. The evaluation found no evidence of any formally agreed common objectives, outputs or outcomes across all of the sports involved.

As a result of the different approaches used, the success of the programme was generally dependent on the competencies, credibility and commitment of one person in each sport. Furthermore, responsibility for supporting the development of clubs through the JCDPP represented an addition to an already busy work programme of YDMs. Consequently, some of the YDMs were not able to commit the time to the programme that they considered sufficient to support clubs fully.

Despite a lack of a common approach to the delivery of the JCDPP, the focus of work with clubs centred on:

- Analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the club.
- Building a committee structure.
- Identifying practical actions to developing the club.

- Implementing the actions.

Of the different approaches taken by YDMs, the approach used in swimming was identified by the evaluators as the most co-ordinated and effective. The investment in swimming was concentrated on the six clubs within one local authority and was supported by a strong partnership with commitment obtained from the clubs, the local authority, the governing body and **sportscotland**.

In the case studies undertaken, none of the other YDMs brought together clubs within their sport for planning purposes or sharing good practice. YDMs chose instead to work with clubs separately. The evaluation suggests that opportunities for coach education were lost in some sports through courses being cancelled due to a lack of interest. This may have been avoided had the participating clubs in other sports been more geographically grouped.

## 3.2 Support Provided to Clubs

Clubs benefited from a range of support through the JCDPP. The survey of clubs revealed the support clubs received most were:

- Professional advice.
- Focussed planning.
- Financial assistance.

### 3.2.1 Professional Advice and Planning

YDMs and SDOs spent time with the clubs providing advice and encouragement, while assisting with the planning process. Many of the respondents in the case studies indicated that the advice and guidance provided by the YDMs and SDOs was the most valuable aspect of the JCDPP.

In general, respondents to the club survey indicated that they found the support from **sportscotland** and their governing body very/fairly valuable. However, almost one half of the responding clubs (5 out of 11) indicated that the support received from the local authority was of no value.

Furthermore, almost all respondents to the club survey indicated that they were very satisfied/fairly satisfied with the support received from **sportscotland** and their governing body. However, around one third of clubs (4 out of 11) indicated that they were not satisfied with the support from the local authority.

Positive comments about local authorities generally came from clubs that already had some contact with the local authority. The clubs that did not have a well-established relationship with the local authority, prior to joining the programme, indicated that they found it difficult to create good relationships. A possible problem with the club/local authority relationship was that clubs assumed that by creating a link with one person in a local authority (e.g. sports development) that means that they have linked with all sections in a local authority (e.g. education). However, this was found not to be the case and a possible source of frustration for the clubs.

## *SWOT Analysis*

The first stage of the JCDPP was to assist clubs undertake a SWOT analysis. A number of interviewees valued this process, which they viewed as helping them to understand what was happening to their club and identify the areas that they needed to develop. This analysis formed the basis on which the club could plan its development.

## *Development Planning*

Stage two of the JCDPP involved preparing a development plan for the club. Some of the clubs surveyed indicated that this was the most valuable aspect of the JCDPP. Most clubs focussed on short-term action plans and the content of plans ranged considerably, from very detailed plans that have been updated regularly to those that contain purposeful actions but lack detail and analysis. The evaluation found that the written plan often did not accurately reflect the overall aspirations and goals of the club, and that the plans did not do justice to the scale of forward planning that was undertaken nor the subsequent activity that occurred.

The range in quality and detail of the plans were dependent upon the preferred approaches of the YDMs and SDOs supporting the clubs. There was no standard approach across each sport or set of development plan templates to assist clubs with development planning.

Despite the lack of a common approach, clubs felt they owned the planning process, even though the plan was in some cases prepared by the YDM.

It was the development planning process that resulted in the most noticeable changes to the management structure of clubs. Without exception, all of the clubs covered in the case studies formalised the committee structure and the roles within the club. Regular meetings were organised and key people committed themselves to specific roles or posts. For several clubs, identifying specific roles led to a search for people to fulfil those roles, which resulted in the recruitment of new volunteers, especially parents and young people.

The evaluation findings suggest that being clear about the requirements of a role or post was a major factor in securing the services of volunteers.

### **3.2.2 Funding**

The funding represented the best-regarded aspect of the JCDPP, with some clubs indicating that the funding represented the hook that attracted the club to the programme.

The amount of funding received by each club differed. From the limited financial information obtained, the amount received by clubs over the three years of the programme ranged from around £750 up to £3,750. The amount was generally distributed through the governing body on a twice-yearly basis, usually on submission of a report or demonstration that the proposed activities had been undertaken. The process of claiming payment from the governing body after the activity had been completed caused some cash flow problems with one club.

From the limited club expenditure data obtained through the survey, almost all of the clubs surveyed used the funding to pay for coach/technical official education (91%), while around one-half of clubs used the funding for facility hire (45%) or purchasing equipment

(55%). It was estimated that 45 per cent of the funding to clubs was used for coach/technical official education, 28 per cent for facility hire, and 26 per cent for equipment.

Funding was also used in some sports for developing and maintaining websites and other publicity materials.

Although the funding was well received, some clubs indicated that had they known the amount of commitment needed, they would not have chosen to join the JCDPP, no matter how much funding had been available.

### **3.3 Impact of the JCDPP on Clubs**

The evaluation found there were a number of positive outcomes from the JCDPP, including changes in the structure of clubs, improvements in the planning processes adopted by clubs, increases in the number of teams and club sections, as well as increases in the number of members, coaches, technical officials and volunteers.

However, despite the positive impacts, the evaluation also found that the delivery of the JCDPP could have been improved to prevent clubs dropping out of the programme and maximise the impacts across all sports.

#### **3.3.1 Management Structure of Clubs**

Although at the start of the JCDPP most of the clubs indicated that they were affiliated to their governing body, that they had a committee, and that the club was constituted, the evaluation found that the management structure of many clubs were far less robust than a survey completed in 2000 would indicate. The committees at some clubs met irregularly and planning at many clubs was poor or non-existent.

The JCDPP had a positive impact on the management structure of those clubs that remained involved in the programme. The input from the **sportscotland** YDMs and local authority SDOs helped clubs create more formal management structures by identifying discrete roles within clubs. At the beginning of the programme, committees at clubs often relied on players and coaches who were already heavily committed. The support provided through the JCDPP helped clubs recruit more people to assist with the running of the club.

#### **3.3.2 Impact on Local Sports Structure**

The approach taken in swimming led to changes in local structures. Through engaging six clubs in a collective way, and securing the involvement of the local authority SDO, a new administrative structure involving the six clubs and the district was established. The clubs were represented on a steering group, which sub-divided into a technical group and a management group. Through the work initiated by the JCDPP, the clubs have co-operated more than in the past. For example, clubs have also been sharing coaches where there has been a shortage. One case study interviewee indicated that prior to the JCDPP this would have been seen as a threat but was now seen as an opportunity.

### 3.3.3 Impact on Club Membership

The evaluation found that the number of junior members, coaches, technical officials and volunteers increased in many of the clubs participating in the programme. Clubs had been successful in recruiting new people to the club as well as increasing the level of qualification of people already in the club. Table 1 below shows the increases since the clubs first joined the JCDPP.

Six of the clubs that responded to the survey indicated that they had experienced an increase in the number of members. These clubs increased their membership by a total of 103 members - an average 17 new members per club.

**Table 1: Increase in the number of members, club officials and volunteers at clubs since the introduction of the JCDPP**

	<b>New to club</b>	<b>Increased level of qualification</b>	<b>Number of responding clubs</b>
Members	103	n/a	6
Teachers / Coaches	47	18	12
Technical Officials	17	46	4
Volunteers	31	n/a	4

### 3.3.4 Impact on Coaches and Coaching

Increasing the membership also increased the need for more teachers/coaches, technical officials and volunteers. Of 12 clubs that responded, the number of new teachers/coaches in the club increased by a total 47, an average of four coaches per club. In addition, a further 18 teachers/coaches increased their level of qualification.

The increase in the number of new and qualified teachers/coaches was achieved as a result of the funding provided through the JCDPP. Much of the funding was used to allowing people to attend coach education courses. However, funding was also used for events, publicity materials and other opportunities that previously had not been possible.

A number of clubs indicated that their coaches had improved their knowledge and skills, and consequently improved delivery to athletes. One club also indicated that players were performing better and that the coaching undertaken in the junior section had pushed standards higher.

### 3.3.5 Impact of Technical Officials and Volunteers

In addition to increasing the number of members and teachers/coaches, some clubs have also increased the number of technical officials and volunteers able to support the development of the clubs. The JCDPP has had some success in persuading clubs to take responsibility for recruiting and developing technical officials (e.g. referees/umpires). Many of these have been young people who have been provided opportunities to learn the role in practice sessions.

### **3.3.6 Impact on Teams, Competitions and School Links**

As a result of increasing the number of members, coaches and technical officials, a number of clubs reported that they had had more teams. Of ten clubs that responded to the survey, 15 new teams had been created as a result of the support from the JCDPP. In order to cater for these new teams, clubs were involved in more competition.

Through the process of development, clubs increased their contact with schools. However, in general, this contact with schools was tenuous and relied upon informal rather than formal relationships.

### **3.3.7 Succession Planning**

One aspect of the JCDPP that came in for criticism was the lack of succession planning. Although clubs were satisfied with the level of support they received in the early stages of the JCDPP, many were of the opinion that the support fell away too soon and that there was little support in the later stages of the programme, or how to progress after the programme finished.

## **3.4 Other Issues**

### **3.4.1 Monitoring and Reporting**

The evaluation revealed serious weaknesses in the monitoring and reporting systems used during the programme. Clear baseline data was missing for many clubs, therefore it was not possible to easily establish the gains made by clubs as the programme progressed.

Although clubs were required to submit annual reports, many failed to do so. Furthermore, some of the reports submitted were the same as the previous year. This lack of reporting affected the ability of the evaluators to report on the outcomes of the JCDPP.

## **4 Conclusion and Recommendations**

The findings of the evaluation reveal that the JCDPP has had some success in:

- Encouraging clubs to review the management structure.
- Supporting clubs streamline the way the club operates.
- Encouraging clubs to take a more strategic approach to planning and to draft development plans.
- Increasing the number of junior members at clubs.
- Increasing the number of coaches and volunteers supporting junior activity at clubs.

A number of factors were considered to be important in the achievement of this success, including:

- Management and structure of the JCDPP.

- Partnerships and the impact of individuals.
- Funding.
- Planning.
- Structure of the club.

Although the JCDPP had its successes, the evaluation established that this success was not uniform across all participating clubs and there was scope to improve further the success of the programme.

Although 40 clubs were initially involved in the JCDPP, only 28 were involved at the conclusion of the programme. Some of the clubs' involvement in the programme was cut short due to the departure of the YDM. Furthermore, a number of the clubs were not given the level of support received by others.

## 4.1 Conclusions

### 4.1.1 Management and Structure of the JCDPP

Management and structural deficiencies with the programme resulted in a number of sports and clubs dropping out of the programme. The success achieved in clubs was heavily influenced by:

- The degree of continuity of the stakeholders involved in the programme;
- The level of commitment of staff and individuals involved in the programme; and
- The approaches used to deliver the JCDPP.

Based on these findings it is likely that the JCDPP would have been more successful had there been a more coherent structure to the programme, including: a commonly agreed and clear set of aims and objectives; sufficient time in the work schedules of YDMs and SDOs to support clubs; criteria for the identification and selection of clubs; guidelines to development officers for providing support to clubs; and, a robust process for monitoring and evaluating the programme.

### 4.1.2 Partnerships and the Importance of Individuals

The evaluation revealed that the greatest successes were achieved where a partnership was formed between the club, the **sportscotland** YDM, the local authority and the governing body. Furthermore, in one sport the creation of a partnership that included six clubs resulted in a greater degree of co-operation between clubs.

The role of the **sportscotland** YDMs was greatly appreciated by clubs. The YDM were considered to be knowledgeable and experienced, and their involvement inspired clubs to engage with the programme. However, despite the involvement of several partners, the clubs regarded the plans as their own. Club ownership of the development plans was considered important to the development of the clubs.

Despite a partnership approach, many clubs noted that involvement from the partner agencies declined as the programme progressed. Although clubs knew that the programme was time limited, some of the clubs would have liked more support throughout the programme. Furthermore, clubs would have welcomed discussion with partners towards the end of the programme to assist them as the club moved back towards independence.

### **4.1.3 Funding**

The funding was an important factor in engaging clubs in the programme and it provided clubs with the opportunity to allow coaches and volunteers to attend courses. Although, some clubs indicated that the funding was not the most important aspect of the programme, it was still an important factor in the success of the JCDPP.

The JCDPP evaluation was not able to establish what impact could have been achieved without the funding element of the programme, however, indications are that many of the successes were achieved through the funding.

### **4.1.4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The evaluators experienced difficulties in using programme documentation and monitoring materials for assessing the progress and impact of the JCDPP. The documentation did not provide sufficiently detailed information to allow progress of the programme to be tracked. Greater consideration needs to be given to monitoring at the outset of a programme to ensure that monitoring tools gather relevant data that will allow progress to be monitored. The methods used to collect the data were not robust enough to avoid gaps appearing in the data.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the evaluation, it is advised that any future club development programme should adopt the following recommendations:

- Prior to the commencement of a programme, the aims, objectives and intended outcomes should be clearly defined and agreed upon by all partners.
- Only the development officers, governing bodies, local authorities and clubs that give a firm commitment to the aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the programme should be included.
- Partners in the programme should agree their commitment. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities for all partner organisations need to be clarified and understood by all partners including clubs.
- If staff are expected to support the development of clubs, this should be part of the core work schedule of these staff – not an additional activity added to already busy work schedules.
- Guidelines should be produced for those delivering the programme. However, there should be scope for a flexible approach to meet the needs of individual clubs.

- Guidelines should be produced for participating clubs, identifying the level of input and support the club can expect. In addition, the guidelines should be explicit about the commitment required of the club and the expected benefits of participating in the programme.
- The criteria for the identification and selection of clubs must be explicit.
- Where possible, the programme should attempt to bring together clubs that are geographically close together.
- Monitoring tools should be designed and piloted to allow progress against the aims, objectives and intended outcomes to be measured.
- Clear auditing of the financial input to the programme should be monitored, including how much funding each club received, when the funding was received, and on what was the funding used.
- A robust system of data collection is needed to ensure gaps in the data do not appear.
- Where possible, evaluators should be appointed at the beginning of the programme to allow the evaluators to follow the progress of the programme as it develops.
- An exit strategy for withdrawing support from clubs should be planned.