

Social Exclusion Policy

The promotion of Social Inclusion among potentially marginalised groups and individuals has been a key 'driver' of the policy of Central and Local Government over the last 35 years. Combating Social Exclusion, especially among the young, has long been a preoccupation of many Charitable Trusts and voluntary youth and community groups. A number of governing bodies of sport have also focused on Social Exclusion and have embraced 'Sport for Good' as an important vehicle through which to implement their 'Equity' plans in partnership with Sport England and as a mechanism through which to 'Grow' participation in their sports.

The Cabinet Office published guidance (2001) which defines social exclusion as:

"a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown".

The critical issue is that these (and other) factors are linked and mutually reinforcing and can combine to create a fast moving and complex vicious cycle.

"Social exclusion is something that can happen to anyone. But some people are significantly more at risk than others. Research has found that people with certain backgrounds and experiences are disproportionately more likely to suffer social exclusion. The key risk factors include: low income; family conflict; being in care; school problems; being an ex-prisoner; being from an ethnic minority; living in a deprived neighbourhood in urban or rural areas; mental health problems; age and disability."

(CABINET OFFICE REPORT 'PREVENTING SOCIAL EXCLUSION' 2001)

The government initiative 'Every Child Matters' (2003) and the 'Children Act' (2004) followed by The Children's Plan (2007) all place the welfare, growth and development of young people at the centre of public policy. In Scotland the report 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (2006) addresses the same concerns.

The 5 key 'Every Child Matters' criteria have become a template against which a number of organizations have decided to target their work and evaluate their impact on young people (up to age 19 and 24 for disabled). It can help focus on the special efforts needed to achieve positive outcomes for young people at risk of exclusion.

In terms of the sport of weightlifting and recreational weight training the implications are:

- Be Healthy - through taking part in our sport, training regularly and developing fitness, strength and power.
- Stay Safe - through being coached with care according to individual needs and learning good body management.
- Enjoy and Achieve - through having fun training, learning skills and competing.

- Make a Positive Contribution - to the club and fellow lifters, perhaps by learning to be a 'Young Referee' and/or assistant coach.
- Achieve Economic well-being - for those over 18 the opportunity to move from volunteering to paid work as sports development personnel and sessional coaches.

“Developing Sport in communities and Communities through Sport”

In addition to committing to the broad social inclusion agenda, which is shared across all political parties, governing bodies of sport need to find ways to help their sport develop more effectively by understanding better the nature and the dynamics of the communities in which it is played.

Sport can also play a part in developing these communities by enhancing self-esteem and providing a focus for community identity.

Why Weightlifting/Training?

1. We can develop the potential of individuals and communities - building self-confidence, competence, life and social skills, health and wellbeing and allowing real achievement through competitive success or qualification in coaching and leadership - where there may be opportunities for employment.
2. We can develop community identity and encourage collective effort by 'Organising Around Enthusiasm' for our sport. This is especially important in areas where the social and environmental infrastructure has decayed. We can help develop Community Pride and help achieve Community Cohesion.
3. We can develop positive links with the wider community - 'connecting with the mainstream' to use the terminology of the Policy Action Team (PAT 10) which related sport to Social Inclusion in the late 1990s. This may be through the Positive Futures programme initiated by the Home Office which is targeted at the most deprived wards in the country, or through partnership with the 'Kickz' Initiative of the Premier League which is administered through the Active Communities Network. Other partnerships, such as with SportsLeaders UK, may allow us to embed our training in their Community Sports Leadership programme.
4. We can link with the Education sector in partnerships with the national network of Specialist Sports Colleges through programmes like the Youth Sport Trust 'Living for Sport', which is targeted at potential excluded young people in school. Our sport can be used to offer support to young people who are not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) in acquiring basic skills. Open College Network or ASDAN certification can offer routes to Inclusion through qualifications. The success of the GB Boxing Awards programme delivered in schools and community groups through the vehicle of Amateur Boxing in partnership with ASDAN offers a good working model.

5. Sport, including recreational weight training, is associated with growing industries, despite the economic downturn. Developing a sporting legacy following the 2012 Olympics provides a 'once in a generation' opportunity for British Weightlifting. Employment and entrepreneurial opportunities exist as well as rewarding volunteering opportunities - for young people as well as adults. Links with Community Enterprise for young people through vehicles like the Prince's Trust can be important in helping set up small businesses.
6. Our sport can lead to a 'lifetime' commitment where a variety of roles and levels of involvement can be adopted, from active participation through to coaching, officiating and administration. This provides a perfect vehicle to 'Grow' and 'Sustain' participation in our sport. Volunteering is at the heart of Weightlifting and is likely to remain so and the commitment to support and value volunteers as seen in the 'V' programme can be crucial in developing our sport, especially as part of the Olympic legacy.

Principles of Community Development to Achieve Social Inclusion through Sport

The Policy Action Team (PAT 10) which was set up by government in 1997 to advise on good practice in addressing the Social Inclusion agenda through Sport Development set out a number of key principles which are still relevant today:

1. **Diversity is to be valued**

We have real ethnic and social diversity in Weightlifting. We need to build on this and celebrate it in marketing our sport to a wide variety of communities.

2. **Local control of projects is vital**

We need to give our clubs the expertise and help them gather the resources to control their own destiny. A Development Officer at National level is clearly an advantage but that person's direct involvement at the local level must be limited so local management and local 'ownership' of projects is vital. The new BWL Web Site can be a crucial tool in helping clubs to access financial and other support.

3. **We can add value to local community initiatives**

We need to make sure that we are an integral part of the communities where our clubs are located. Schools and Community Groups can benefit from our 'product'.

4. **Partnerships should be equitable and based on mutual benefit**

We need to make sure that any partnership in which we, or our clubs, are involved is a fair and honest one. Our invaluable voluntary workforce are not there to be exploited for

someone else's short term objective. These objectives need to be shared and based on mutual benefit.

5. [We need to deal with actual needs](#)

We must make sure that our partnerships are based on the hard reality of local conditions, not just ideal or theoretical prescriptions. This should be based, as far as possible, on hard demographic data and examples of progressive practice. The objectives need to be explicit from the outset and to fit with our ethos.

6. [Be flexible in dealing with change](#)

Traditional ways of doing things may be past their 'sell by' date so we need to manage change effectively and sensitively. We need to value our volunteers and ensure that 'professionalism' and partnerships with outside agencies don't alienate our core membership who will always be volunteers.

7. [The effects of what we do need to be lasting](#)

We need to avoid the 'Quick Fix' approach and any partnership or project needs to have an exit route planned in from the start. **Projects should have sustainable effects rather than sustainable delivery mechanisms.** We need to become more and more self-sufficient and although we will benefit from having Development Personnel 'on the ground' we have to recognise that we are always going to be a volunteer based sport. If a development initiative only survives because of heavy 'outside' investment in the mechanism for delivery, it is not sustainable (although lessons learned thereby may be valuable).

8. [Quality is vital](#)

Anything we do needs to be based on professional 'best practice' and on the National (or Industry) Standard where relevant, as in Coach and Official Education.

9. [Connect with the mainstream](#)

we need to be aware of where social policies in health, education and community safety are going, find 'best fit' with our core objectives and help our clubs to get access to mainstream resources as well as helping the 'mainstream' achieve its objectives by using our 'product'.

Conclusion

These 9 principles are derived from the work of the Policy Action Team (PAT 10) which studied good practice in this field in the late 1990s. The principles, which were set out to guide sport and the arts in promoting social inclusion, are a good way of defining the fundamental issues which we must be aware of as we take the sport forward to increased competitive success AND increased social relevance,

especially as we become increasingly involved in the use of weight sport in the 'Sport for Good' context.