

Lessons learned - Increasing participation of children with disabilities in Physical Education through a collaborative school and third sector partnership approach

Cath Walker^{1*}, Grant Stanley¹, Milly Blundel¹, Diana Burton², Marion Jones¹, Steph May¹, Sue Walker¹

¹ Faculty of Education, Health and Community, Liverpool John Moores University, I M Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, Liverpool, L17 6BD, UK

² Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing, University of Wolverhampton, Gorway Road, Walsall, WS1 3BD, UK

Corresponding author: Cath Walker

Email: c.m.walker@ljmu.ac.uk

Tel: 01512315242

Abstract

This paper reports on an evaluation of the Everton in the Community Pan-disability Coaching Programme, an initiative which is concerned with enhancing the inclusion of children with disabilities in PE in schools across Merseyside. It aims to provide young people with a positive experience of sport and to increase their fundamental physical skills and to raise self-esteem. It thus affords schools an opportunity to enhance their existing sporting provision through using the expertise of Everton in the Community coaches. As such, this initiative is located within the wider context of the Big Society, within which local communities and third sector organisations are empowered to be involved in the delivery of public services. The evaluation involved a mapping survey which revealed that pupils with disabilities, particularly those with physical disabilities, tended to have limited opportunities to take part in group games and found that individual activities/sports, such as gymnastics and swimming were the predominant provision in place for them. A post-intervention questionnaire complemented by interviews with students, parents/carers, teachers and coaches, showed that, whilst third sector delivery can provide a flexible and innovative approach, it can also pose substantial logistical, structural and cultural challenges. Based on the findings of this evaluation three areas have been identified as key to enhance the quality of the partnership: Relevant training for all those involved, generation of a sense of ownership amongst all

members of the partnership and creation of a communicative space where all voices can be heard to ensure mutual engagement and collaboration.

Key Words; Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Disability, Sport, Physical Education.

Introduction

London's hosting of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics increased the positive international perception of how the UK views disability (56%) (British Council, 2012). Furthermore, it has had an impact on how governments recognise the role sport can play in facilitating inclusion (Nicholson & Hoyer, 2007). Defining inclusion is however problematic. Vickerman (2007) argues that an agreed definition of inclusion is unclear. Other authors (Sato et al, 2007) suggest, inclusion refers to the integration of students with and without disabilities together in classes and sessions. The authors of this paper however would propose that whilst it is progressive for disabled students and their non-disabled peers to be integrated together in classes, often the children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can become disengaged and isolated even in the same classes. The key to inclusive provision should be about appropriate activities and achievable outcomes in these sessions for ALL people, students, participants with disabilities.

A poll directly following the Games found that four in five people (79%) thought the Olympics will increase the amount of sport people play in Britain (IPSOS MORI 2012). However, a recent survey conducted by the Sport and Recreation Alliance (Cox, 2013) revealed that 86% of clubs said that they had not noticed any change in the amount of enquiries they had received from disabled people. Furthermore, almost 96% suggested there was also no difference in the amount of disabled people volunteering at their clubs. Perhaps of even greater concern is the finding that almost 75% of the clubs questioned proposed that they felt they needed more support and knowledge in terms of facilitating the participation of disabled participants in sport and physical activity, suggesting that significant work needs to be undertaken to capitalise on the rise in profile of sport for disabled people and transfer this into 'real' opportunities on the ground. This raises the question of whose responsibility it is to generate and provide this knowledge and the provision of opportunities.

In July 2010, Prime Minister David Cameron launched the 'Big Society' (Cameron, 2010). Cameron argued that by empowering local communities, involving them in the delivery of public services and promoting the benefits and rewards of volunteering would, as he suggested, 'be a big advance for people

power.’ Cynics might argue that that this was a reply to the credit crunch and a distraction from the huge spending cuts introduced as part of the economic downturn. Detractors such as Kisby (2010) propose that ‘the Coalition Government’s big idea is to look to ordinary citizens to shoulder the burden, through increasing taxes, cutting public spending and encouraging citizens to do their duty by running services themselves wherever possible’ (p. 485). He goes on to say that, ‘At worst, it is dangerous, a genuine belief that charities and volunteers, rather than the state, can and should provide numerous, core public services’ (p. 490).

This in itself is not a new philosophy. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair’s New Labour Government post 1997 attempted to introduce a similar policy, when he believed that the third sector could assist in the delivery of goods and services (Houlihan & Green, 2009). Houlihan and Green (2009) aligned this modernisation project alongside changes in sports provision by suggesting that the realignment of two key non-governmental organisations for sport, Sport England and UK Sport, reflected this new philosophy. As part of this new focus, communities, charities and volunteers were to be encouraged to become involved in the delivery of grassroots provision of sport and physical activity.

There is a widespread view that there is limited research indicating that non-profit and volunteer organisations can work successfully in partnership to provide sport and activity opportunities aimed at disadvantaged groups (Cassidy & Gow, 2005; Miller, Mitchell, & Brown, 2005) This is becoming increasingly more significant, as research suggests that a reduction in social program provision and the active breakdown of a sense of community is one of the key concerns for disadvantaged communities in terms of creating a sense of belonging, solidarity and self-worth (Cassidy & Gow, 2005).

The reduction in investment of the statutory infrastructure within communities is also acknowledged as problematic by other authors, such as Kelly (2007). They suggest that there has been a shift, a modernisation of the delivery of public services in the UK, resulting in the third sector being encouraged to take up the role of deliverers to the community. Blears (2003) proposes that New Labour in the late 90s promoted this approach, as it was felt that the third sector delivery provides a flexibility in delivery and conditions together with an innovative approach that public sector organisations did not have. Kelly (2007) suggests that this approach can at times have challenges in that this top-down form of policy making and the bottom-up delivery mechanisms often result in gaps and contradictions in that provision. Bailey (2003) goes further arguing that this approach results in a strategic gap between government policy and what is actually delivered at a grassroots level. Is it effective therefore for third sector voluntary organisations to be responsible, either wholly or in part, for the delivery and coordination of this provision? In the context of this discussion, the authors of this paper were asked to evaluate a project that provides sporting opportunities for disabled children in schools in the northwest region of

England. The Everton in the Community Pan-Disability Coaching programme is funded by the Everton in the Community Foundation and is delivered in partnership with schools across Merseyside.

The programme has been offered to schools across Merseyside and neighbouring regions for 15 years and aims to provide young people with disabilities with a positive experience of sport and to increase their fundamental physical skills and to raise self-esteem. Although Merseyside (and Liverpool in particular) is often highlighted as being among the most deprived communities in the country (Church Urban Fund 2013) the schools studied for this research were positioned in both affluent and deprived boroughs within the greater Merseyside area, therefore socio-economic status was not a variable under consideration in this particular study. It involves work with Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools (80%) and specialist disability units in mainstream primary and secondary schools and seeks to allow children with disabilities to take part in an enjoyable, high quality physical activity programme as part of their physical education (PE) lessons. It thus affords schools an opportunity to enhance their existing sporting provision through using the expertise of Everton in the Community coaches. These coaches are employed on both a voluntary and paid basis and have a responsibility to liaise with schools within a specific geographical area. Up to 16 coaches are working on the programme at any one time. All have undergone equality and impairment specific training and hold a Level 1 Football Association (FA) coaching qualification, whilst lead coaches require a minimum Level 2 Coaching Disabled Footballers qualification.

Key aims and purpose of the research

By investigating a wide range of perspectives, including pupils with disabilities and non-disabled pupils, parents/carers, teachers/teaching assistants and coaches, the project sought to build a robust research base which informed the production of teaching resources that will promote socially/physically inclusive learning environments for children. It also provided those at the heart of the process, the young people, with a voice that can inform the development of pan-disability programmes in mainstream and special schools. For the purposes of this paper these children with disabilities will be referred to as children with SEND.

Literature review

Teachers of PE are facing daily challenges to facilitate pupils' accessibility and entitlement to quality PE lessons, particularly in mainstream settings (Vickerman & Coates, 2009). While New Labour placed the inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream schools at the top of their political and educational agenda, the current Coalition Government favours an approach that introduces diversity in terms of settings and providers. This policy shift encourages schools working in partnerships with parents and agencies (DfE, 2011), which reflects the aims of the UK Big Society initiative in which third sector providers deliver services no longer provided by central government.

During the past 15 years, the education system in England has undergone fundamental change and reforms, including an increased emphasis on the inclusion of children with SEND within mainstream education. This is borne out in a number of legislative and policy measures, such as the Inclusion Statement in the National Curriculum (QCA, 1999), the SEN and Disability Rights Act (DfES, 2001a), the revised Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b), the Human Rights Act (HMSO, 1998) and the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) agenda.

Despite the fundamental changes that have taken place with regard to inclusive practices over the past twenty years, provision is still not meeting the needs of all children, particularly with regard to PE where teachers feel ill equipped in terms of the knowledge and skills required to respond adequately to pupils' individual learning needs (Vickerman & Coates, 2009). Against this backdrop this evaluation project was concerned with the Everton in the Community Pan-disability Coaching Programme delivered in Merseyside schools.¹

Overall participation in sport by young people with a disability is low in comparison to their non-disabled peers. In fact, 5% do not participate in sport in or out of school lessons (Sport England, 2001). This aligns with Howard's (1996) finding, according to which children and adolescents with impairments participate in physical activities, such as PE, to a lesser degree than do their peers without impairments. Moreover, older children with disabilities can find themselves excluded from activities in addition to the 'social disadvantage of their disability' (Petrie, Storey & Candappa, 2002). As highlighted by Goodwin and Watkinson (2000) and Fitzgerald *et al.* (2003), positive experiences of PE by children with disabilities are impacted on by the behaviour of others, resulting in negative feelings of low self-esteem and disengagement. The authors highlight in their studies, that students with physical disabilities were on occasion rejected, neglected, or seen as objects of curiosity by their classmates, thus impacting on their ability to engage. They believe that only when children feel wanted, valued and able to express themselves physically can they engage effectively in PE lessons. Such positive experiences are a consequence of supportive relationships with peers and teachers (Lienert, Sherrill & Myers, 2000). As Block and Zeman (1996) maintain, successful inclusion is not a utopian dream and can be achieved through due process. They believe that pupils with disabilities, when supported, can be included in regular physical education without compromising the programme for non-disabled pupils. However, practitioners involved in providing PE and school sport require additional guidance and other resources to assist them in the delivery of their programmes (Stevenson, 2009). Surely, therefore, we should be sharing best practice success stories and providing key deliverers of inclusive sport and PE with suitable resources and guidance, through which we can improve the experiences of children with impairments.

Project method

The research was located within a *bricolage* conceptual framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & Berry, 2004; Kincheloe, 2001), which allowed the area under investigation to be examined from a variety of lenses and thereby avoiding reductionist, one-sided interpretations (Kincheloe, 2001). Accordingly, it employed multiple methods in order to capture a range of stakeholder perspectives with regard to the unique techniques and methods used by Everton in the Community.

The study consisted of two distinct phases:

Phase 1: (February - June 2011): *Planning and mapping*

This phase involved preliminary discussion with the collaborative partner, Everton in the Community; an initial literature review including the identification of key concepts (inclusion, equal opportunities, partnership, multi-agency working, Third Sector); development of research instruments and a mapping survey of pupils' perceptions and experiences of school PE and sport/physical activities outside school. The 8 schools that took part in the mapping exercise were not all the same schools that took part in the second phase due to availability. The mapping exercise was designed to ascertain the children's feelings about their PE experiences prior to the visit of the Everton in the Community project. The project team wished to evaluate what activities were beneficial to the young people and whether the EITC project had made a positive impact on the children's experiences of physical education in school. In total of the 8 schools that took part in the mapping the individual participants were broken down as follows; Foundation= (n=4), KS2 = (n=23), KS3 = (n=48), KS4 = (n=20), Mainstream pupils = (n=4), Special school pupils = (n=107), Type unknown = (n=7). The children self-declared if they considered they had a disability.

Phase 2 (June 2011–July 2012): *Evaluation of stakeholder perceptions and initial draft of a resources pack*

This phase involved interviews with teachers, pupils and Everton in the Community Disability and Equality Manager; focus group discussions involving Everton in the Community coaches; evaluation questionnaires completed by pupils, parents/carers and teachers/teaching assistants; observation of Everton in the Community coaching sessions in schools; data analysis; and development of a resource pack. In the evaluation exercise 9 schools took part; these schools were different from the schools in Phase 1 except for a Primary school in Widnes where 1 Year 4 student completed the mapping exercise in summer term 2011 and 45 students in Year 5 and 6 completed the evaluation questionnaire the following spring.

Limitations and constraints

Conducting this collaborative study, which involved a number of agencies, proved a complex undertaking and required a flexible approach to navigate through the often unpredictable and inevitable challenges that arose in the course of the investigation. Coordinating and agreeing the nature and purposes involved similar logistical challenges as those experienced by the coaches delivering their sessions in schools located across the Greater Merseyside region.

A particular difficulty was the alignment of individuals' availability, e.g. Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) project team members, Everton pan-disability coaches and the pupils, parents and teachers/teaching assistants in the schools where coaching sessions were taking place. For example, the pan-disability coaches had to engage in protracted negotiations with schools to arrange dates and times for LJMU staff to visit, which, when finally agreed, often clashed with teaching commitments. The complexity of the situation was compounded further by a high degree of fluidity of the situation, which was generated by cancellation of sessions/visits, postponement of agreed dates and changed venues at short notice. The moving of members of the partnership to new posts presented a further challenge in terms of maintaining effective communication and continuity of agreed activities. Consequently, we were not able to track a representative sample of schools pre- and post-intervention as planned.

Data collection and analysis

Prior to accessing the field, ethical approval was gained from the LJMU Ethics Committee. Gatekeeper permission from the head teachers of the participating school was obtained as well as consent of parents/carers of pupils participating in the study.

From June 2011 to May 2012, the following methods were employed in the collection of quantitative and qualitative data:

- Mapping exercise by means of a self-completion survey questionnaire, which investigated pupils' perceptions and experiences of PE and physical activity in general (N=118) prior to participation in the programme. The pupils came from both mainstream and special schools, KS2 – KS4 (see phase 1 explanation in the project design section for breakdown.)
- Evaluation questionnaires completed by pupils (N=85) participating in the Everton Pan-disability coaching session, their parents/carers (N=3) and teachers/teaching assistants (N=4) The 8 schools that took part in the mapping exercise were not the same schools that took part in the evaluation questionnaires (n=9) except for one Primary in Widnes where 1 Year 4 student completed the mapping exercise in summer term 2011 and 45 students in Year 5 and 6 completed the evaluation questionnaire the following spring.
- Face-to-face, recorded interviews (15-30 mins.) with pupils (N=4) and teachers (N=3) to provide in-depth analysis

- Two focus groups with coaches (N=8) and one interview with the Everton in the Community Disability and Equality Manager to identify the programme's achievements and challenges arising from its delivery in primary and secondary schools across Merseyside
- Observation of pan-disability sessions to identify the unique techniques and methods used by Everton in the Community to inform the development of a resources pack for teachers who are not PE specialists. The sessions (duration 1-2 hours) provided by Everton in the Community entailed multi-sport activity sessions. Although football was a key sport played, activities also included basketball, volleyball and uni hockey. The sessions were designed more to encourage children to become active and have FUN, rather than to introduce and develop specific sports skills.

The analysis of quantitative questionnaire data was conducted via SPSS using simple statistics, whilst a thematic approach with the aim of identifying emerging themes was used in the analysis of qualitative data generated by the questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions.

Key findings

Emerging findings from this project are that pupils generally find the Everton in the Community pan-disability programme to be a rewarding experience. However, there are challenges regarding delivery of the programme in diverse school settings and in embedding the practices in the school curriculum in a sustainable way. The programme appears to work best when schools have well established, collaborative links with Everton in the Community coaches and fully understand how to meet the pupils' needs adequately. A more detailed analysis of the findings is presented below.

Mapping exercise: pre-intervention pupil perspective

The sample (N=118) consisted of pupils aged 3-18 (M=12.05; SD=2.98), including 73 boys, 38 girls and 7 for which their gender was unknown. 116 pupils had declared a disability (Pupils did not have to declare whether they had a disability or not; most children declared that they were disabled and were comfortable doing so. However, not all children declared the nature of their disability. Consequently more children with specific types of disabilities (e.g. autism or cerebral palsy) may have been surveyed than the researchers were aware.). The following key findings emerged in relation to teacher support and time per week spent on physical activity/sport:

- Over half of all pupils (54.2%) found that teachers helped them in developing a physically active lifestyle (See Table 1);
- The majority of all pupils (85.6%) indicated that they took part in at least 1-3 hours physical activity/sport per week at school with only 10.2% of

pupils saying that they took part in more than 3 hours of sport. (See Table 2).

Table 1: My teachers helped me enough.

	Number	Per cent
Yes	64	54.2
Not Sure	1	0.8
No Answer	53	44.9
Total	118	100.0

Table 2: Hours of physical activity/sport I do at school per week.

HOURS	Number	Per cent
<1	2	1.7
1-2	68	57.6
2-3	33	28.0
>3	12	10.2
No answer	3	2.5
Total	118	100.0

As for participation in team and non-team sports, there was great variance with regard to the types of sports in which those with declared disabilities engaged at school (See Figures 1-4). Pupils with learning and speech/communication difficulties were able to participate in a wider variety of both team and non-team sports than pupils whose disabilities were more physical in nature. Pupils with physical disabilities were much more likely to be limited to participating in just three sports/physical activities: dancing, swimming and trampolining.

Figure 1: % of pupils with non-physical disabilities taking part in team sports

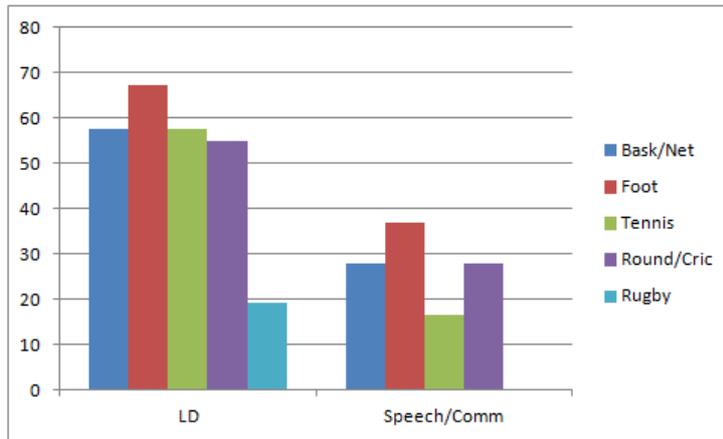


Figure 2: % of pupils with physical disabilities taking part in team sports

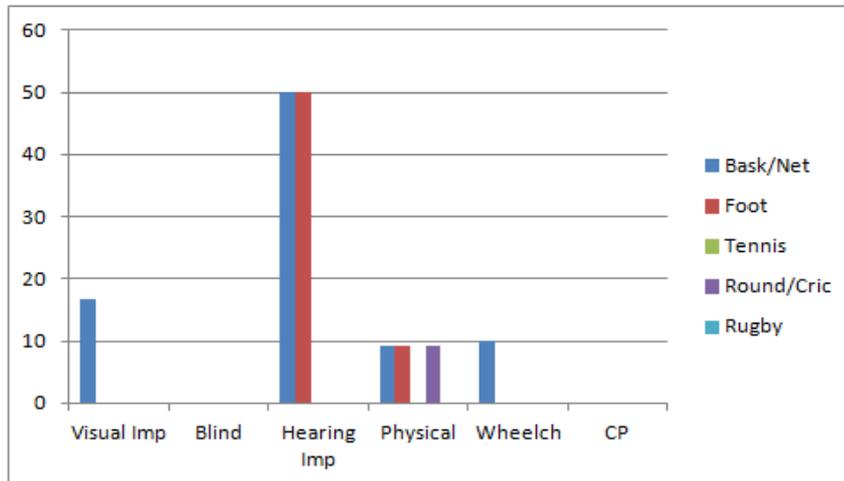


Figure 3: % of pupils with non-physical disabilities taking part in non-team sports

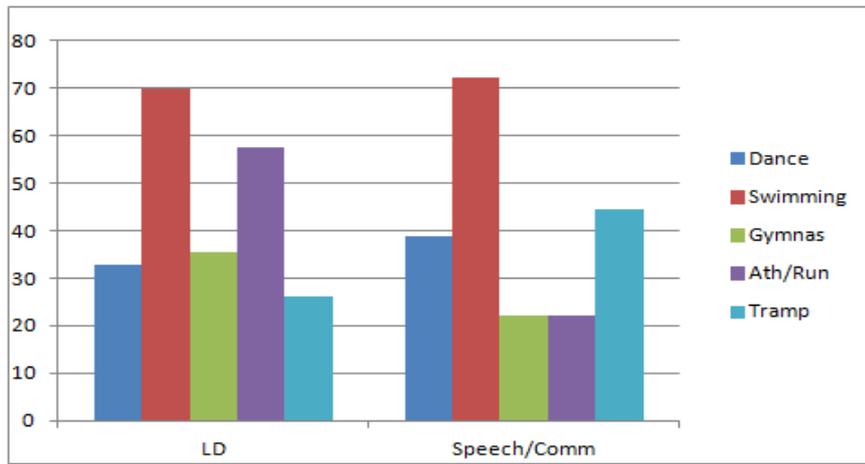
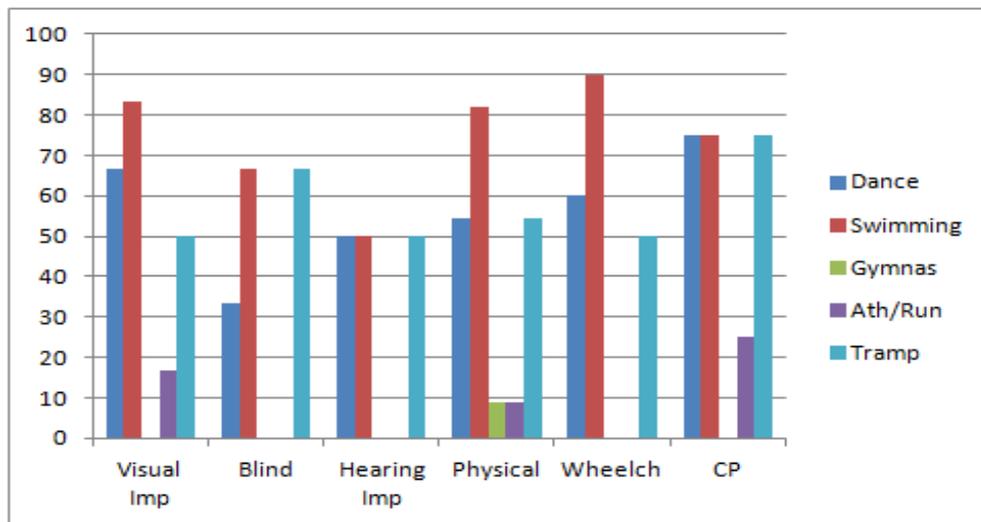


Figure 4: % of pupils with physical disabilities taking part in non-team sports



Evaluation of stakeholder perceptions

Survey of students at schools in northern and western suburbs of Merseyside

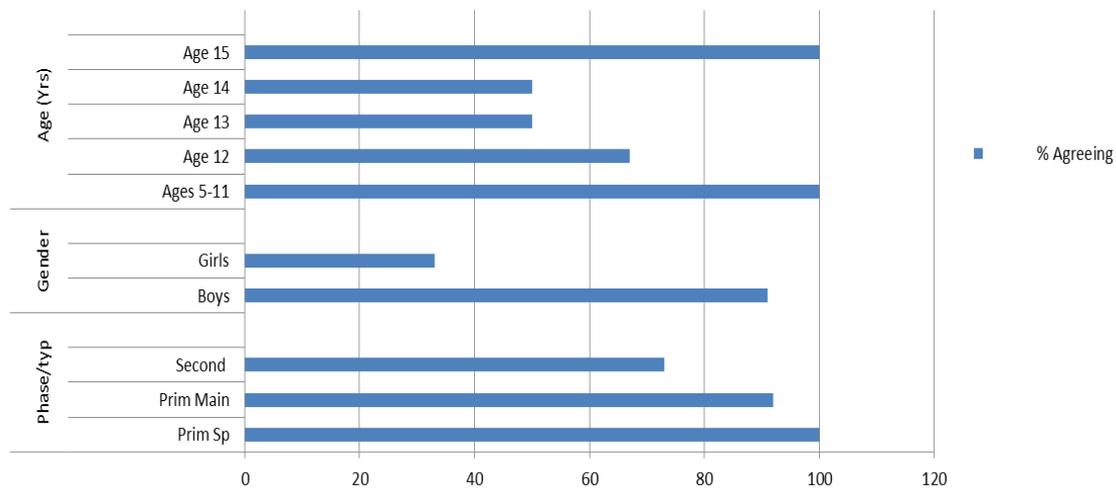
The participant sample consisted of 40 pupils (6 primary special, 12 primary mainstream, 1 secondary special and 21 secondary mainstream schools) and 8 schools (1 primary special; 5 primary mainstream; 1 secondary special; 1 secondary mainstream school). The questionnaire responses of this participant group revealed three key findings:

a) Perceived fun factor (See Figure 5)

Considerably more boys (91%) than girls (34%) agreed that taking part in the pan-disability programme was fun. The proportion of pupils in primary mainstream (92%) and primary special (100%) schools who stated that the coaching sessions were fun was higher than that in secondary schools (73%).

Another interesting pattern emerged in relation to pupils' age in that all pupils in the 5-11 bracket and older pupils aged 15 agreed that the programme was fun compared with 12-14 year olds (67% at age 12; 50% at age 13; 50% at age 14).

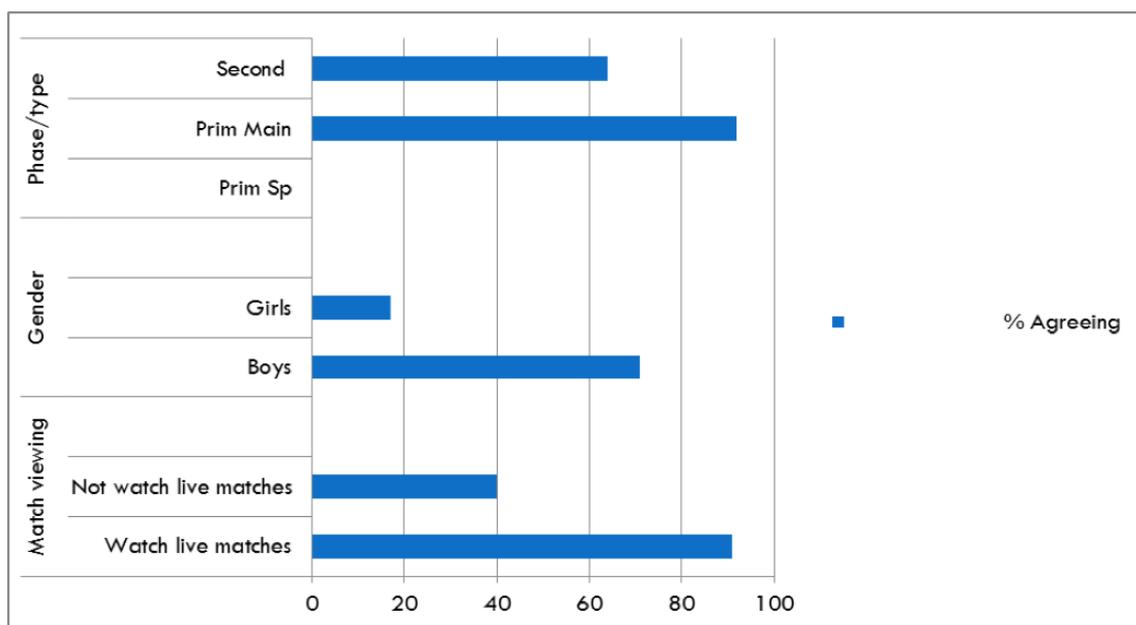
Figure 5: Participating allowed me to take part in sport in a fun way.



b) Impact of the programme on involvement in 'in school' and 'out of school' sport (see Figure 6)

Considerably more boys (71%) than girls (17%), more primary (92%) than secondary (64%) mainstream pupils and more viewers of live football matches (91%) than non-viewers (40%) agreed that as a result of their participation in the Everton pan-disability programme they are more likely to engage in sport activities 'in school' and 'out of school'. Somewhat worryingly, no pupils at the primary special school who took part in the survey thought that this would be the case.

Figure 6: I am more likely to take part in sport in and out of school due to my participation in the Pan-disability coaching programme.



Evaluation by stakeholders across one geographic cluster of schools – primary mainstream, primary special and secondary special

Pupil evaluation questionnaires at a primary mainstream school

The participants consisted of mainstream Primary Year 5 and 6 pupils (N=45; Male=24; Female=21), including 12 pupils with an indicated disability.

Comparison of gender, year group, declared/non-declared disability, Everton supporter/non-Everton supporter and watching/not watching live matches revealed the following findings:

a. gender-related issues:

- more boys (88%) than girls (71%) agree that taking part in the pan-disability programme is fun.
- the majority of boys (88%) and girls (76%) agree that the pan-disability programme is different from PE lessons.
- boys (75%) are more likely than girls (57%) to play sport in and out of school whilst or after taking part in the pan-disability programme.

b. age-related issues

- the majority of Y5 (82%) and Y6 (75%) agree that taking part in pan-disability programme is fun.
- a smaller percentage of pupils in Y6 (63%) than Y5 (85%) think that the pan-disability programme is different to normal PE lessons.
- a smaller percentage of pupils in Y6 (38%) than in Y5 (70%) think that they will take part in sport in and out of school whilst or after taking part in the pan-disability programme.

c. disability status-related issues

- 91% who declared a disability agreed that the pan-disability programme is fun, as compared to 75% who did not declare.
- 75% who declared a disability found the pan-disability programme different from PE lessons compared to 85% of those who did not declare a disability.
- There was no difference between groups declaring (67%) or not declaring (67%) disabilities regarding likelihood to play sport in and outside of school.

The perspectives of parents/carers of pupils at the primary mainstream school

Although it proved difficult to obtain access to parent/carer views, the three parents/carers who returned a questionnaire at the primary special school were glowing in their praise. Comments included:

I am very happy about my child taking part in the pan-disability programme. My child is overweight so I welcome any sports activities in school time for him.

I would recommend the programme to other parents/carers because the children really enjoy it and my child really looks forward to Everton coming into school.

My son loves it.

The perspectives of teachers at the primary mainstream school

They believed that the pan-disability programme allows everybody to take part and thus facilitates the inclusion of children with disabilities. It increases their confidence and self-esteem, generates enjoyment and results in lots of progression. Whilst the nature of activities and level of inclusion is largely determined by the kind of equipment that is available, the support of a teaching assistant is paramount.

Perspectives of teacher at primary special school

The teacher highlighted the confidence building and fun aspect of the programme, emphasising the importance of the need for coaches to provide differentiation. In an environment where children work predominantly with female teachers/teaching assistants, the pan-disability programme provided a welcome opportunity for them to interact with the male coaches. The expertise of the coaches is essential and determines the quality of the session delivered on the day, as not all coaches are equally adept at working with the children, who have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD.) Prior discussion between teachers and coaches and collaborative planning are presently lacking and would be beneficial.

Perspectives of teacher and teaching assistant at secondary special school

The teacher identified a number of aspects that he considered key in the successful delivery of the coaching sessions and stated that the teacher inviting the pan-disability programme into the school must be aware of his/her role in this partnership. For instance, they are in charge of health and safety and the delivery of the curriculum. The pan-disability coaching programme is different from PE in that it can provide contact and engagement for children with disabilities who need to engage with the real world out of school time. For example, students in this school have even been to Shanghai, China as a result of the pan-disability coaching programme. The teacher believes that PE/Sport must be seen as a vehicle for personal development with an emphasis on ability not disability. The Everton in the Community programme can also provide students with opportunities to gain vocational qualifications in sports leadership and eventually progress to an apprenticeship as an Everton in the Community coach. With this aim in mind students can be provided with opportunities to develop interpersonal and problem solving skills and increase in confidence and self-esteem.

However, to ensure the success of the programme, it is vital that school staff are familiar with its aims and objectives and that they engage in collaborative planning prior to any school-based coaching sessions taking place. Furthermore, schools need to recognise and appreciate the differences between teaching and coaching.

Findings from focus groups/interviews with the Everton in the Community coaches and the Disability and Equality Manager

The two focus group discussions conducted with the pan-disability coaching programme coaches in December 2011 and April 2012 were in close alignment with the teacher and pupil perspectives in that fun and enjoyment is a key feature of all sessions. Activities, which do not exclusively involve football, often change during the session to ensure children stay engaged. The coaches believe that children are included in PE/activity sessions where they are currently not engaged effectively in curricular time and that there are some sporting benefits, such as talent identification, development and opportunities to participate where none previously existed, e.g. after-school clubs.

The perceived benefits of the programme were seen to be the enhancement of children's self-esteem and self-confidence, increased physical activity and the provision of competitive opportunities. However, to ensure the delivery of a high quality programme the following key issues were identified as needing to be addressed:

- Appropriate training: (a) there is a need for impairment specific training for coaches (e.g. medical training on specific impairment issues such as epilepsy, ADHD); (b) generally, teachers working with children with disability in PE sessions lack appropriate training in how to include children with disabilities; (c) special schools often have better ideas for inclusion, but often do not have PE specialists.
- Partnership arrangements: (a) there are different levels of school partnership arrangements in each area of Merseyside, which is reflected in a variation of contacts and differing degrees of engagement; (b) there is a need for consultation to identify children's individual needs prior to the session.
- Engagement/Ownership: (a) teachers' support and engagement with the programme is vital to ensure effectiveness; (b) however, schools sense of ownership varies greatly.
- Planning: (a) a flexible approach to planning in relation to the setting is required; (b) schools often make last minute changes, which can result in coaches having to plan on the hoof.

The interview with Everton in the Community Disability and Equality Manager corroborated the views expressed by the coaches. He particularly stressed the important role of teaching assistants during sessions and the need for teachers to be present, even if not highly knowledgeable about sport or PE. He also highlighted the social and personal benefits to the children along with physical skill development (co-ordination, hand-eye co-ordination, movement skills---

backwards, forwards and sideways), which is often not addressed in school PE lessons. Moreover, the key achievements of the Pan-disability coaching programme need to be seen in its provision of teacher support and guidance, e.g. identifying appropriate activities and strategies that can be employed within an inclusive approach to PE. Ultimately, the programme seeks to raise teachers' expectations of their children with disabilities and to offer some children exit routes and further opportunities to progress in football. Some children have gone on to play for regional and national disability sports teams. There is also a growth in after-school clubs as a result of the programme, thus providing children with disabilities with external opportunities like their non-disabled peers.

Issues identified by the Everton in the Community Disability and Equality Manager

Notwithstanding the success of the programme, the Everton in the Community Disability and Equality Manager identified a number of issues that need to be addressed, which resonate with those highlighted by the coaches. Firstly, the facilities/equipment available in schools (and Health and Safety regulations) can be restricting in relation to participation and inclusion of all children. Secondly, in order to include as many children as possible it would be desirable to expand the range of activities, e.g. by offering dance. Thirdly, there is no formal agreement between schools and teachers and the Everton in the Community programme team about the content, process and expected outcomes of the coaching sessions. This is often down to each coach and the particular school where sessions take place. Partnerships with schools are variable and often depend on the relationship, personality, skills and experience of the coach allocated to a particular area.

Discussion of Key Findings

Available facilities and equipment at schools, along with arbitrary rules put in place regarding health and safety at many schools, were often restricting in relation to participation and inclusion. Although schools have to adhere to the Equality Act 2010 (HMSO, 2010), many buildings are old and therefore have challenges in terms of access: gyms may not be on a low level; outside space may not be accessible for wheelchair users; whilst ramps, doorways or gym equipment may not be adaptable. Additionally, schools may not have access to flexible or adapted sport equipment that could aid inclusion, e.g. different size, shape and coloured balls, or differing height nets, hoops etc.

Regarding health and safety, there was no conclusive evidence that these issues had been carefully thought through in many schools, and decisions in this regard seemed arbitrary and very risk-averse. Moreover, no risk assessments appeared to have been formally conducted at some schools before decisions were taken on how children with disabilities were to be included in physical activities. In spite of this caution, there was no evidence of formal protocols being in place for sharing information with coaches about how to protect the physical health and safety of individuals with disabilities vis-à-vis their particular physical conditions, as recommended by Lytle *et al.* (2013). Whilst one school prohibited students without physical disabilities to play on the

hard surface with those using wheelchairs, teachers were willing to put almost sixty children on the field at once to play a game of football with three coaches. Such inconsistency meant that no-one except those isolated on the hard surface in wheelchairs and thus excluded from activities were truly safe. Surely, dividing the class and allocating them to different parts of the field and a smaller group to play on the hard surface with those students using wheelchairs would have been the sensible and safe option and would have allowed for inclusive experiences for everyone. It appeared that, at this school promoting the physical fitness of those with physical disabilities was not seen as a priority. Ideally, physical activity would have been of a sufficient calibre to promote cardiovascular fitness for those in wheelchairs (Hoffman, 1986); however, the type and intensity of activities provided were not likely to have done so. In addition, there were no contingencies in place at some schools when foul weather prevented outdoor activity and the session was cancelled due to no back-up space provided in the building. Thus, the impression was created that physical education was a dispensable add-on of less importance than other subjects in the curriculum.

There was evidence of significant variation within the schools regarding knowledge of including children with disabilities in activities (cf. Crawford, 2011; Vickerman, 2007). Teachers and students were frequently unaware of just what the football sessions were to accomplish in relation to the National Curriculum Physical Education learning goals. Were the sessions to supplement PE lessons delivered by the teacher or to provide a welcome replacement of one lesson a week when the coaches took over the PE class? Furthermore, there was considerable variation in the extent to which those involved in co-ordinating the use of the coaches at the school, usually the head or deputy head, engaged in discussion with Everton in the Community representatives regarding session objectives, content and format and how this could provide teachers with information about what the coaches could provide. Real agreements between schools, teachers and coaches were not always apparent and were often highly idiosyncratic.

Whilst this may reflect aspects of the nature of collaborative partnership between public and third sector (cf. Huxham & Vangen, 2000), the more likely explanation here may have been that this was the result of a lack of time and communicative space for discursive work (Fenwick, 2004). As Fenwick points out, such work is likely to be needed when two organisations with disparate organisational cultures join forces. The school cultures appeared in many instances to be much more rigid in what they expected to take place with students, whereas the coaches were readily adaptable, willing to please and enthusiastic. Such figurations (Elias, 1978) had unintended consequences (Merton, 1936). The coaches and the programme as a whole were bending over backwards to expand their services to as many students and schools as possible, whilst the school frequently saw an opportunity to harness the manpower of those external to the school to free up teachers from the responsibility of delivering the curriculum, but without taking responsibility to assist the coaches in the effective delivery of sessions.

Recommendations

A key recommendation based on the findings of this project is the introduction of a protocol enabling agreement about programme delivery, including expectations and objectives for participating schools, the children and the Everton in the Community team. This would have to be accompanied by raising teachers' expectations and awareness of children's potential for participation and achievement in PE and school sports regardless of their ability/disability. In addition to ensure the sustainability of such a high quality programme, more funding needs to be secured in order to employ more coaches and engage more schools. In addition, the Everton in the Community pan-disability coaching programme and participating schools should address the following needs identified by the Everton in the Community manager:

a) appropriate training:

There is a need for impairment specific training for coaches, i.e. medical training on specific impairments such as epilepsy, ADHD and how to respond to any impairment specific issues that may occur. For instance, there is a need for particular consideration for participants with hearing impairments or ADHD. Could coaches be given basic signing skills to communicate with the participants? Are there certain strategies that coaches could use for dealing with behavioural difficulties or children with ADHD? It is suggested that specific training could be added to coaches and volunteers induction to prepare them for possible scenarios.

Generally, teachers working with children with SEND in PE sessions lack appropriate training. Research conducted by Vickerman and Coates (2009) and Fitzgerald (2012) suggests that teachers, PE teachers in particular, do not have adequate training to support students with SEND in PE. They should be provided with appropriate resources and strategies and in-service training to develop an understanding of how and where to seek help from relevant organisations.

Special schools often have considerable expertise in the process of inclusion and have the children's needs at the heart of their philosophy. Much of their time and experience is aimed at ensuring the children can be educated and taught according to the key areas of the National Curriculum. However, often these schools do not have key PE specialists or more importantly PE specialists with experience and knowledge of including children with disabilities in PE. Provision of such teachers should be a priority of schools and local authorities.

b) Partnership arrangements

There are different levels of school partnership arrangements in each area of Merseyside, which is reflected in a variation of contacts and differing degrees of engagement. Everton in the Community has established close relationships with boroughs across Merseyside; however there are inconsistencies apparent in the process of delivery across and within these boroughs. Although they have key staff (coaches) who work in partnership within each of their allocated areas with schools, clubs and volunteers and thus provide the infrastructure for disability

sport in that borough, there is great variation in the nature of these infrastructures. While some boroughs have paid disability coordinators and/or numerous special schools, others do not. It is difficult therefore to ensure a 'one size fits all' delivery model for all boroughs or partnership areas. To that end it is imperative that minimum agreements are made with all boroughs and partners regarding the content of delivery, and the roles and responsibilities of the various partners and stakeholders in this process.

Also, there is a need for consultation to identify children's and young people's individual needs, as the coaches taking part in our evaluation project were not always aware of both the numbers and differing impairments of participants prior to the session. They often had to think on their feet and adapt their planned programme on the day of its delivery. This has implications for the successful integration of all children with disabilities. If coaches were provided with the relevant information in advance, they would be aware of any specific needs or issues they need to take into consideration in their planning, preparation and delivery of a session. For example, children who are wheelchair users may need an alternatively sized football than other children.

c) engagement/ownership

Teachers' support and engagement with the programme is vital to ensure effectiveness. However, schools' sense of ownership varies greatly. Some teachers stay in the session and work closely with the coaches, others appear unsure about participating, perhaps due to lack of sport or PE training or experience. Those schools that derive maximum benefit from their involvement with the Everton in the Community pan-disability programme do so as a result of working closely and collaboratively with the coaches and do not see it as a replacement for their PE sessions in curricula time.

Concluding remarks

Based on the findings of this evaluation the following three areas have been identified for further development. Firstly, enhancing the quality of partnerships across all stakeholders needs to be furthered through relevant training for all those involved in the planning and delivery of the programme. Secondly, developing a sense of ownership amongst all participating schools is crucial to ensure mutual engagement and collaboration. Thirdly, in order to achieve this, a communicative space needs to be opened up (Wicks & Reason, 2009) for all members' voices. The coaches must not be seen as teacher substitutes, but as colleagues who work collaboratively with teachers and teaching assistants in delivering learning outcomes for all children regardless of where they are located on the ability/disability continuum. Working across professional/occupational boundaries sits well with the concept of multi-agency work and is the hallmark of a hybrid professionalism (Hulme et al., 2009), which all stakeholders with a vested interest in this endeavour need to embrace. As Wicks and Reason believe, 'communicative spaces offer possibilities of new forms of living relationships quite different from those which are solidly rooted in the system' (2009: 258). However, as the Everton in the Community pan-

disability project has shown, a clear sense of purpose and ownership needs to be agreed across all participants. While occupational and professional boundaries need to be recognised, they also need to be sufficiently permeable to facilitate communication and collaboration between all participants.

With this goal in mind a shared understanding of the concept of partnership and what it means to engage in collaborative activities needs to be developed between schools and third sector organisations in order to ensure a truly inclusive approach to children's engagement with sport and PE in schools.

Notes:

¹The findings of this evaluation have informed the development of a resources pack for teachers and coaches, which consists of a modified version of Walker's (2009) ABCs cards. They were originally designed to assist teachers in promoting students' agility, balance, coordination and speed. The development of the new version of the cards draws on the insights gained from the evaluation of the Everton in the Community pan-disability programme and relevant literature concerned with effective pedagogical practices in inclusive education (Goodman & Burton, 2010; Griffith, 2009; Rix et al, 2009). From this social-constructivist perspective competence is perceived in relation to physical activity/education as the skills and abilities that students can demonstrate in meaningful activities (Grenier, 2007). The cards will provide teachers and coaches with pedagogical guidance on how to plan inclusive lessons using the STEP framework (Black & Stevenson, 2011) allowing them to apply their own ideas in their planning and delivery of PE lessons whilst implementing modifications regarding space, task, equipment and/or people.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Everton in the Community staff team, particularly Steve Johnson and Andrew Brady, for assisting in gaining access to their network of partnership schools and in the collection of data. Their support and input has been invaluable.

References

- Bailey, S. (2003) Strategic public expenditure. London: Routledge.
- Black, K. and Stevenson, P. (2011) The inclusion spectrum incorporating STEP. Sports Development in the United Kingdom Website. Available at <http://www.sportdevelopment.info/index.php/browse-all-documents/748-the-inclusion-spectrum?catid=98%3Adisability-sport-a-physical-activity> . [Accessed 10th June 2013.]
- Bleas, H. (2003) Communities in control: public services and local socialism. London: The Fabian Society.

Block, M.E. and Zeman, R. (1996) Including students with disabilities in regular physical education: effects on non-disabled children. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 13, 38-49.

British Council (2012) British Council research shows 2012's strong overseas impact for the UK. British Council Website. Available at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/press/research-2012-overseas-impact> . [Accessed 10th June 2013.]

Cameron, D. (2010) 'Big Society' speech. Liverpool Hope University, 19 July 2010. Available at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/speeches-and-transcripts/2010/07/big-society-speech-53572>. [Accessed 10th June 2013.]

Cassity, E., and Gow, G. (2005) Making up for lost time: the experience of Southern Sudanese young refugees in high schools. *Youth Studies Australia*, 24(2), 51-55.

Church Urban Fund (2013) Tackling poverty together: Poverty in numbers <http://www.cuf.org.uk/national-and-diocesan-poverty-statistics> accessed on [26Th September 2013]

Coates, J. and Vickerman, P. (2010) Empowering children with special educational needs to speak up: experiences of inclusive physical education. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 32(18), 1517 – 1526.

Cox, S. (2013) Olympic and Paralympic Games: legacy survey. Sport and Recreation Alliance. Available at <http://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/policy/research/olympic-and-paralympic-legacy-survey> . [Accessed 10th June 2013.]

Crawford, S. (2011) An examination of current adapted physical activity provision in primary and special schools in Ireland. *European Physical Education Review*, 17, 91-109.

Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (2005) *Handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Department for Education (DfE) (2011) *A child-centred system: the government's response to the Munro review of child protection.* London: DfE.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2001a) *Special Educational Needs and Disability Rights Act.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2001b) *Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.* London: HMSO.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2004) *Every Child Matters.* London: HMSO.

Elias, N. (1978) *What is sociology?* London: Hutchinson.

Fenwick, T. (2004) *Towards a critical HRD in theory and practice.* *Adult Education Quarterly*, 54, 193-209.

Fitzgerald, H. (2012) 'Drawing' on disabled students' experiences of physical education and stakeholder responses. *Sport, Education and Society*, 17(4), 443-462.

Fitzgerald, H., Jobling, A. and Kirk, D. (2003) Valuing the voices of young disabled people: exploring experience of physical education and sport. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 8(3), 175–200.

Grenier, M. (2007) Inclusion in physical education: from the medical model to social constructionism. *Quest*, 59, 298- 310.

Goodman, R.L. and Burton, D.M. (2010) The inclusion of students with BESD in mainstream schools: teachers' experiences of and recommendations for creating a successful inclusive environment. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 15(30), 223–237.

Goodwin, D.L. and Watkinson, E.J. (2000) Inclusive physical education from the perspective of students with physical disabilities. *Adapted Physical Education Quarterly*, 17, 144-160.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (1998) *The Human Rights Act.* London: HMSO.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO) (2010) *Equality Act 2010.* London: HMSO.

Hoffman, M.D. (1986) Cardiorespiratory fitness and training in quadriplegics and paraplegics. *Sports Medicine*, 3(5), 312-330.

Houlihan, B. and Green, M., (2009) Modernization and sport: the reform of Sport England and UK Sport. *Public Administration*, 87(3), 678–698.

Howard, L. (1996) A comparison of leisure-time activities between able-bodied children and children with physical disabilities. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 59(12), 570–574.

Hulme, R., Cracknell, D. and Owens, A. (2009) Learning in third space: developing trans-professional understanding through practitioner enquiry. *Educational Action Research Journal*, 17(4), 537-550.

Huxham, C. and Vangen, S. (2000) What makes partnership work?. In: S. Osbourne (ed.) *Public-private partnerships: theory and practice in international perspective*. London: Routledge. 293-310.

IPSOS MORI (2012) Britons surprised by how Olympics brought country together: half think it will have lasting effect with more volunteering and sport. Available at <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3031/Britons-surprised-by-how-Olympics-brought-country-together.aspx> . [Accessed 10th June 2013.]

Kelly, J. (2007) Reforming public services in the UK: bringing in the third sector. *Public Administration*, 85(4), 1003–1022.

Kincheloe, J.L. (2001) Describing the bricolage: conceptualizing a new rigor in qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(6), 679-691.

Kincheloe, J.L., and Berry, K.S. (2004) *Rigour and complexity in educational research: conceptualizing the bricolage*. New York: Open University Press.

Kisby, B. (2010) The Big Society: power to the people?. *The Political Quarterly*, 81(4), 484-491.

Lienert, C., Sherrill, C., Myers, B, (2000) Physical educators' concerns about integrating children with disabilities: a cross- cultural comparison. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 1, 1-17.

Lytle, R., Lavay, B., & Rizzo, .T (2010) What is a highly qualified adapted physical education teacher? *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*, 81(2), 40-50.

Merton, R.K. (1936) The unanticipated consequences of purposive social action. *American Sociological Review*, 1(6), 894-904.

Miller, J., Mitchell, J., and Brown, J. (2005) African students with interrupted schooling in the high school mainstream: dilemmas for teachers. *Prospect*, 20(2), 19-33.

Nicholson, M., and Hoye, R. (2007) Australian sport policy: the use and abuse of the social capital concept. Paper presented at the Sport Management Association of Australia and New Zealand Conference, Waüieke Island Resort, Auckland, New Zealand, AUT University, Division of Sport and Recreation.

Petrie, P., Storey, P. and Candappa, M. (2002) *Inclusive play: supporting provision for disabled children*. London: Institute of Education.

Qualifications Curriculum Authority (QCA) (1999). *The National Curriculum – handbook for secondary teachers in England*. London: QCA.

Rix et al. (2009) What pedagogical approaches can effectively include children with special educational needs in mainstream classrooms?: a systematic literature review. *Support for Learning*, 24(2), 86-94.

Sate, T., Hodge, S., Murata, N. & Maeda, J. (2007) Japanese physical education teachers' beliefs about teaching students with disabilities. *Sport, Education and Society*, 12 (2) pp 211-230.

Sport England (2011) Disability Survey 2000: survey of young people with a disability and sport. Sport England Website.

Stevenson, P. (2009) The pedagogy of inclusive youth sport: working towards real solutions. In: H. Fitzgerald (ed.) *Disability and Youth Sport*. London: Routledge. 119-131.

Vickerman P. (2007) Training physical education teachers to include children with special educational needs: perspectives from physical education initial teacher training providers. *European Physical Education Review*, 13(3), 385-402.

Vickerman, P. and Coates, J.K. (2009) Trainee and recently qualified physical education teachers' perspectives on including children with special educational needs. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 14(2), 137–153.

Walker, S. (2009) *Developing practical ABCs: agility, balance, coordination and speed*. Liverpool John Moores University.

Wicks, P.G. and Reason, P. (2009) Initiating action research: challenges and paradoxes of opening communicative space. *Action Research*, 7(3), 243–262.