

Sport Unlimited Term 4 Report (summer 2009)

1. Executive Summary

This is the first termly report for year two of Sport Unlimited – 2009/10 – covering the summer term 2009.

The Sport Unlimited project began in April 2008 with 12 CSP trailblazers delivering 500 individual projects to almost 11,500 children and young people during the summer term. In September 2008 the remaining 37 CSPs began their delivery of Sport Unlimited, and during that autumn term, delivery was scaled up to over 4,000 individual projects with over 76,000 young people taking part.

The spring term figures represented significant further growth of the programme with over 141,000 young people taking part in Sport Unlimited. The summer term figures represent a period of consolidation at an extremely challenging part of the school calendar. Approaching 100,000 young people were engaged in Sport Unlimited activity and almost 75,000 of these were retained. The summer term offers a specific challenge to engage and retain young people aged between 11 and 19 due to the intense curriculum commitments and exam periods between Easter and July.

The summer 09 term has also enabled the measurement of the 'sustainability intentions' of approximately 1,400 participants. This will continue throughout the duration of the Sport Unlimited project, with a programme of robust sustainability tracking also commencing from the autumn 09 term. The initial results of this robust tracking will be available at the end of March 2010.

The Sport Unlimited project to date has engaged over 325,000 young people and has succeeded in retaining over 250,000 of these participants, with a strong term of delivery now getting underway.

2. Putting the building blocks in place

Listed below are a range of Sport Unlimited achievements that illustrate the continued development of the Sport Unlimited programme as it enters its second year...

Joined up approach

- The **wide representation** of non-sport partners around the table has continued. This has facilitated cohesive planning and delivery and the integration of sporting and non-sporting plans. A key strength has been demonstrated by the number of projects being delivered with the youth sector in environments where sporting opportunities were previously extremely limited. A strong example of this approach has been the 'Rurban' project in Hertfordshire. A case study has been produced to evidence how a 'new lease of life' has been created within eight youth clubs during the summer term, with a further 24 youth clubs involved during year 2. Partnership working with NGBs has also continued to increase with several NGBs offering hybrid / adapted versions of sports to meet the needs of the semi sporty, for example new programmes launched in Gloucestershire through British Water Ski (BWS).
- Sport Unlimited has gone '**deeper**' into the **sporting networks** (working with more sports, more clubs, more coaches) and worked '**wider**' - engaging with more organisations such as charities and trusts whose roles link to sport and physical activity where there are shared priorities. For example the Jump Bristol (Parkour) project which has brought together the Avon and Somerset Police, the Safer Bristol Partnership and Positive Futures; and the Mountain Biking project in Essex which utilises an outdoor education centre instructor and is part funded by the local PCT and supported by the CTC national cycling organisation.

Student voice

- The Sport Unlimited programme has been **shaped** by youth sport development teams and SSPs with vast knowledge of young people on the back of wide scale consultation. Many projects are becoming more **young people led** with participants developing a stronger voice in terms of what they want and the format for delivery, plus taking a lead in the delivery itself and training to become young leaders. Examples of this approach include young people designing their own routines, creating their own costumes and helping to arrange logistics, such as the 'Moves' dance project in West Yorkshire.
- The evidence bank of data on young people's tastes and preferences continues to grow, along with more evidence of how to **communicate with young people**, and what, where and how they would like to take part in sport and physical activity. A greater emphasis on linking up with the youth sector, focusing on sports provision which aims to improve community cohesion (including Friday and Saturday night activities) and greater emphasis on providing a mix of sport and social opportunities has been demonstrated throughout the summer term.

Activities framework

- The **delivery of less formal activities** has continued. Greater evidence from young people on what sports are perceived as 'cool', plus where and how they want to get active has led to further development of the range of activities on offer. Many alternative sports and 'revamped' traditional sports have been taking centre stage for example 'sound basketball' (an integrated concept of basketball and music that is young people led) in Central London. Activities have included 'beach sports' and 'street surfing' in Sussex, and 'cycle speedway' in Hull (via Humber Sport).
- **Taster / introductory 'multi sport' sessions**, offered by / linked to local clubs have been central to providing the opportunity for semi sporty young people to try new things and 'find their sport'. A strong example is in Lincolnshire where multi sport taster sessions at Lincoln University have helped to establish a new multi sports club.
- **New and strengthened pathways** have been formed to generate sustainable projects, working with the FE / HE sector, NGBs and community partners. A range of new clubs and leagues have been established to cater for increased demand. For example a brand new 'girls only' football league catering for under 11s in Lincolnshire has been formed to cater for interest generated from a taster festival.
- Work towards **improving child protection and safeguarding** operational standards in a broader range of delivery settings has continued, along with helping organisations to achieve clubmark and focus on high quality.

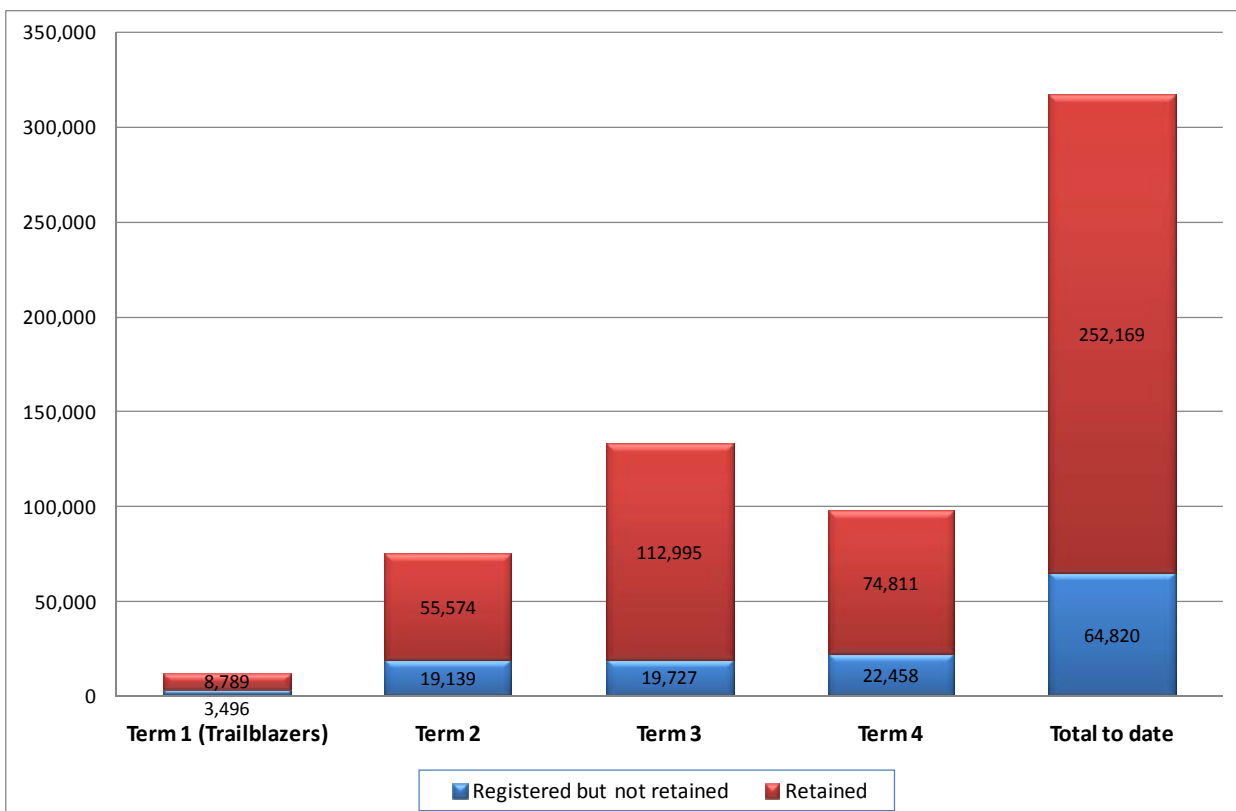
Signposting

- Sport Unlimited has worked hard to **support the transition** from school to community sport and activity. Sport Unlimited has funded projects which aim to familiarise young people with their coaches in school environments before transitioning the sessions to community sites and coordinating transport where necessary (such as a boxing project in Birmingham where coaches accompanied young people on bus journeys for the first few trips) - these approaches have resulted in high levels of retention.
- The **delivery of sessions by external coaches** (such as instructors from the Lazer Centre in West Yorkshire delivering rock climbing and abseiling to the Friday Night Project in Leeds) ensures that joining a club, or continuing to participate informally, feels like a natural progression not a big step. Also taking sport to young people in community environments that they already feel comfortable in (such as youth clubs, car parks and outdoor spaces) has expanded further assisted by national and local projects such as StreetGames, doorstep sport and Sport on the Road. In Leicestershire mapping evidence has shown that Sport on the Road has succeeded in attracting and retaining young people from deprived areas of the city.

- Several CSPs have launched their own websites (for example Active Devon, Northumbria Sport and Active Gloucestershire (Bristol City Council)) as part of their **targeted marketing of Sport Unlimited**. This approach forms part of the strategic planning to modernise how opportunities are communicated to young people. Evidence has shown that this does not mean abandoning traditional communication methods such as posters, flyers or demos in assemblies, but adding to these with methods that utilise new technologies, and enhancing existing communications to ensure that they appeal to young people. Social networking, text messaging, promotional DVDs, flash drives with pre-stored info and web-based information all have a role to play, alongside eye-catching and vibrant communication via traditional methods.
- All of these achievements have been underpinned by a strong emphasis on **continuous improvement** led by innovative participant evaluation to measure satisfaction and impact, and the sharing of best practice across the CSP network. SIRC have continued to drive this process forward by assisting CSPs to use innovative and interactive evaluation and to capture and showcase the evidence using new technologies.

3. Targets

Sport Unlimited aims to retain 900,000 children and young people in sustainable sporting activities by 2011. The period up until Easter 2011 incorporates 8 school terms of delivering activities by all 49 CSPs. There remains a long way to go in order to achieve the target. However, the bar chart below shows encouraging progression and there is continued optimism that the building blocks are in place to hit the targets in full over the next 2 years.



4. Summer term outcomes

Appealing to both genders

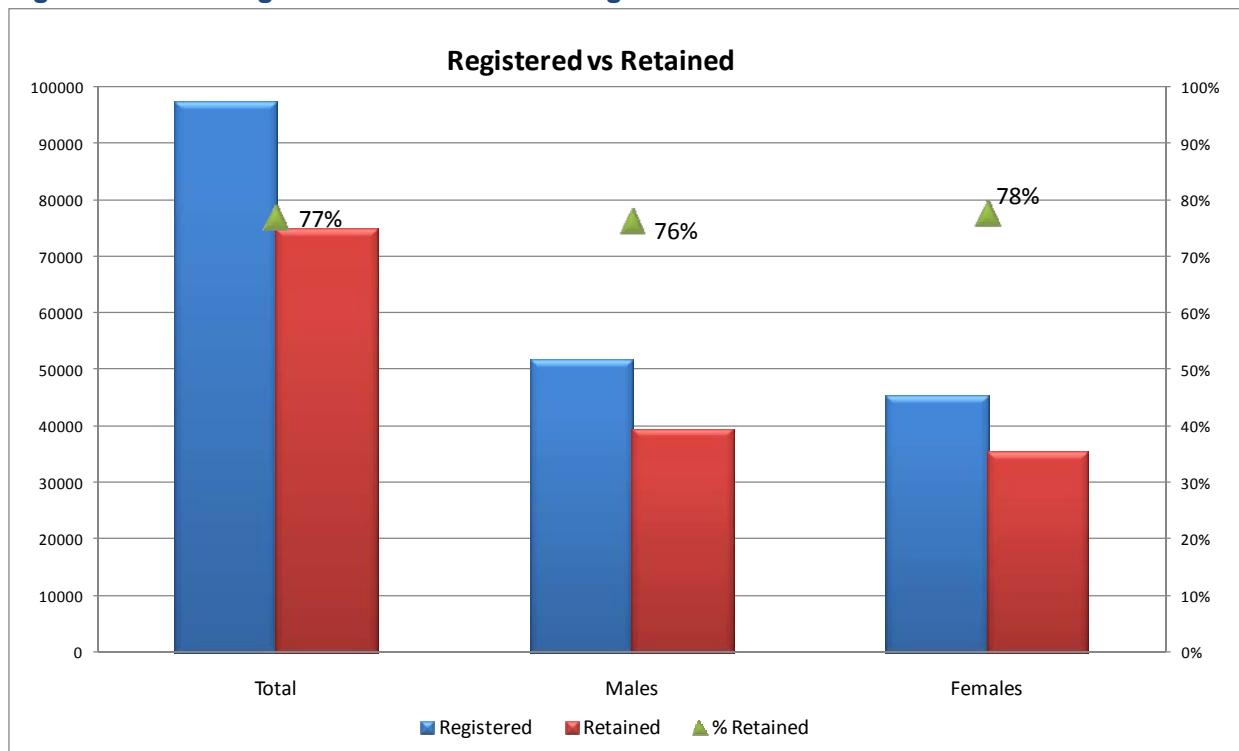
Sport Unlimited has been successful in appealing to both genders with 53% males and 47% females taking part in the summer term.

The retention rate is fairly consistent across both genders but with a slightly higher proportion of female participants being retained (78% v 76%).

High retention rates

The average retention rate across all 49 CSPs was 77% (illustrated in figure 1.2), this compares favourably with the retention rates of 72% during the summer term 08 and 74% in the autumn term 08 - but is slightly lower than the spring term 09 retention rate of 79%. The highest rates were: Northumberland Sport (91%) and Sport Hampshire and IOW (89%). High retention rates have been achieved where young people have been consulted about particular sports they would like to try and where they have received personal information or invitations to attend sessions (for example, Active Norfolk who undertook large scale surveying and have seen their retention rates steadily rise.) Several CSPs have invested heavily in marketing and signposting activities to young people and have also seen increases in retention rates, including Suffolk Sport who focused on obtaining feedback and consulting with young people and have exceeded their targets for the summer term and South Yorkshire Sport who have focused on student voice and signposting.

Fig 1.2 – Overall registered versus retained figures summer term 2009

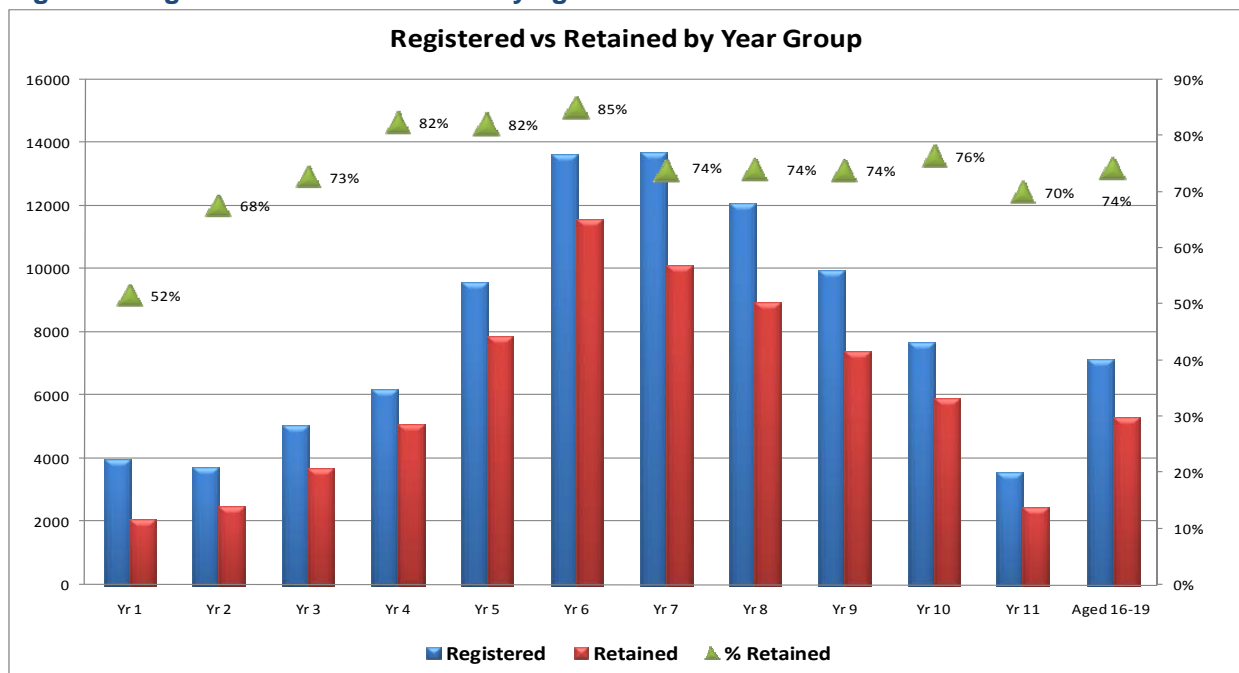


Retention rates by age

The highest proportion of participants (49%) were from school years 7 - 11 (aged 11 to 16), with a further 7% of registered participants aged between 16 and 19. The embedding in of the Further Education Sports Coordinators (FESCOs) has helped generate a greater focus on delivery for young people aged 16-19 - this term 7% of participants were from this age group (compared with 9% during the spring term) however summer term delivery is a particular challenge as many students leave college half way through the term. A review of the Year 2 plans for Sport Unlimited indicates that this figure will continue to rise and CSPs are responding to a call from Sport England to increase post 16 provision.

There is still some variance in retention rates by age, with retention rates ranging from a low of 52% (year 1 pupils) to 85% (amongst year 6 pupils). There are noticeable signs of retention rates generally decreasing with age, with dips from year 7 onwards. However, much good work is going on to help to support these transition periods, including strong club links nationwide as well as support with transportation, good youth sector links and retention rewards. The gap between year 11 and post 16 has narrowed during the summer term. The reduction in retention rates for years 9, 10 and 11, compared with the spring term, confirms the challenge of engaging and retaining these groups during the summer term.

Fig 1.3 – Registered versus retained by age



Sustainability

It is difficult to assess how many young people are being signposted into clubs through just one method of evaluation. Therefore a combined methodology using the following has been developed:

- participant diaries
- 'before and after' surveys to measure changing perceptions
- exit polls
- end of project evaluations
- follow up sustainability 'tracking' one term later (due to start autumn '09)

Evidence that is building suggests that many young people are joining clubs or continuing to participate informally as a result of Sport Unlimited, and there is substantial good practice from this fourth term of delivery which showcases how sustainability is an integral part of this project. Small scale measurement of the sustainability of Sport Unlimited undertaken in the first few terms highlighted some promising signs of sustainable participation. The summer term 'exit polls' found that 9 out of 10 respondents (91%) had been **inspired** by Sport Unlimited to continue taking part in sport. However there remains a need to implement more robust, systematic and wider scale surveying of sustainability. Further sustainability measurement systems will be implemented from the autumn term onwards.

Sustainability can be measured in the following ways and SIRC will attempt to collect evidence against all these areas:

- ≈ Young people continuing to participate informally after initial 10 weeks
- ≈ Young people joining teams and clubs after initial 10 weeks
- ≈ New teams being formed as a result of Sport Unlimited
- ≈ The formation of new leagues as a result of Sport Unlimited
- ≈ Sessions becoming permanent and sustainable without Sport Unlimited funding.

The definition of 'sustainability' in the widest sense as measured through the Sport Unlimited programme is:

"The number of participants indicating that after taking part in an SU programme, they will continue to participate in activity either in informal settings (such as skateboarding or pay-and-play opportunities) or via more formal opportunities such as becoming members of facilities/clubs/leagues, for at least the next school term".

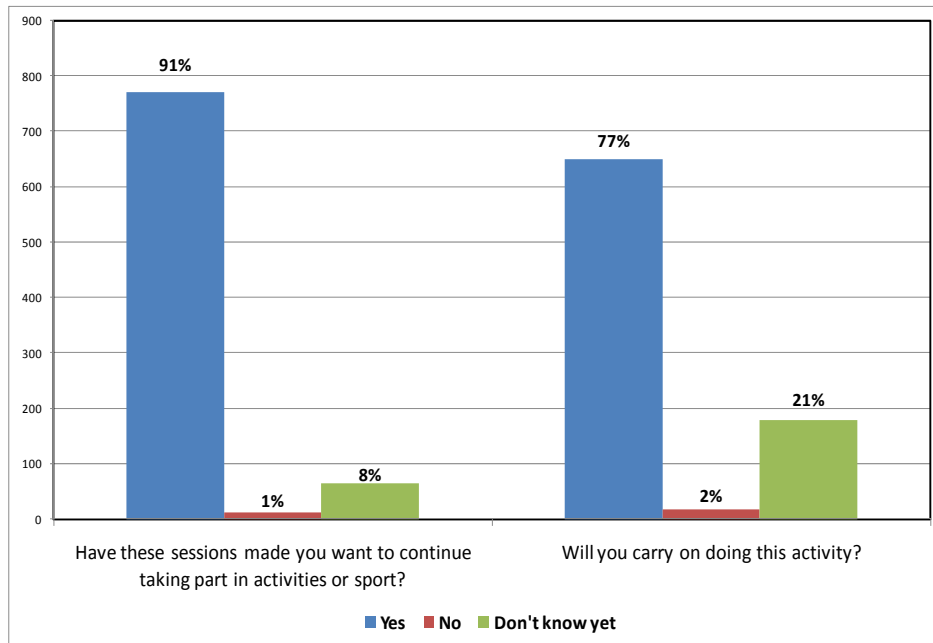
The following examples showcase achievements in terms of sustainability:

- ≈ **Sport Essex** has been running a hugely successful mountain biking project with young people from 10 secondary schools, supported by the Colchester Blackwater School Sport Partnership. An instructor from the local county outdoor education centre delivered the sessions. The sessions were progressive starting on school premises working on mountain biking skills and then going off road in local public parks. A significant increase has been seen in the number of students that have started riding to school as a result of participating in the sessions. The club will continue to run over the next academic year as a sustainable pathway has been secured with funding and support from the PCT for an extra trailer and an additional 16 bikes.
- 
- ≈ **Sport Essex** and the Chelmsford Athletics Development Officer have worked together to attract over 200 young people to 12 different athletics activity sessions. The clubs consisted of 8 weeks of different athletics events and a competition on the final day. The clubs achieved great numbers through working in partnership and making the sessions fun for athletes to keep coming back to learn more skills. In addition to the continuation of the clubs, additional incentives were provided for continued participation including free vouchers to join clubs at Chelmsford Sport and Athletics Centre and places on summer holiday courses.

Headline figures from sustainability surveys:

The data below is taken from 541 'before and after' surveys and 850 'exit polls' completed by participants during the summer term.

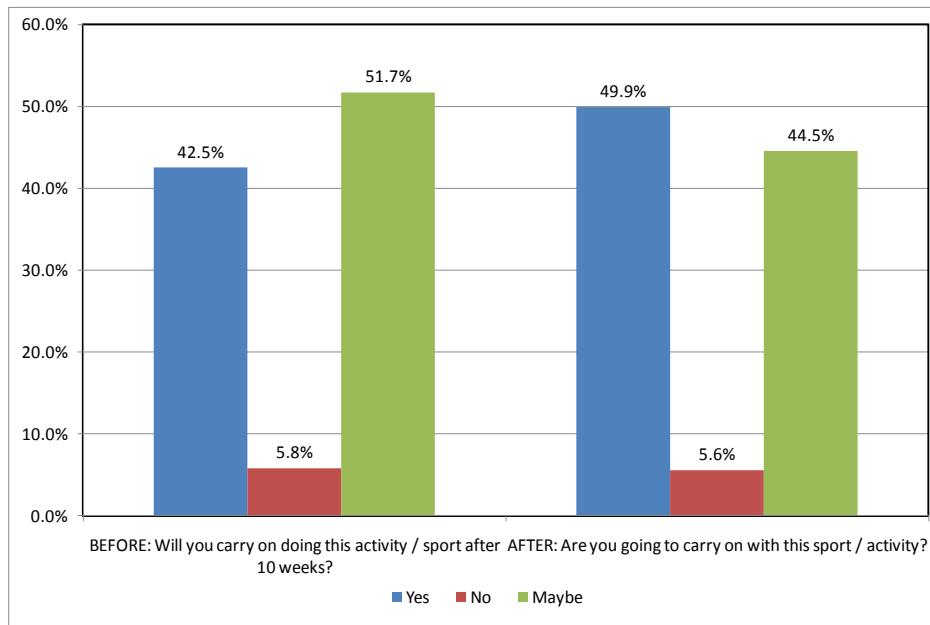
Figure 1.4: Key findings from the 'exit polls' - intentions to continue...



In total 9 out of 10 respondents (91%) reported that the sessions had **inspired them** to continue taking part in sport.

Over three quarters of respondents (77%) expressed the intention to carry on participating, with a further 21% still 'unsure'.

Figure 1.5: Key findings from the 'before and after' surveys - measuring any changes in intentions over the 10 weeks...

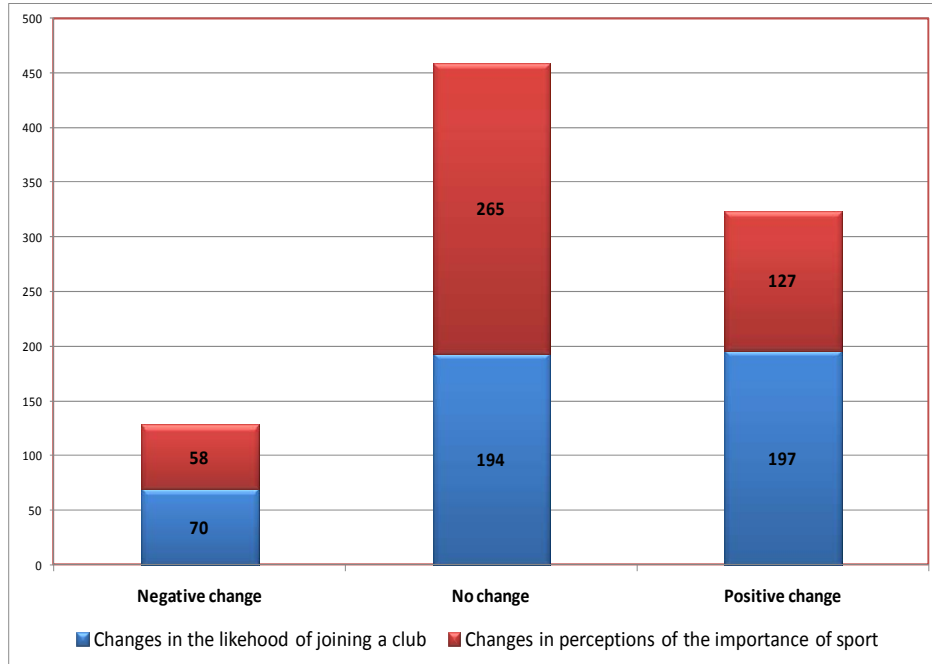


At the onset of the Sport Unlimited sessions, 43% of participants expressed the intention to carry on participating, whilst 52% were 'unsure'.

In the final weeks of the sessions, the proportion of participants intending to carry on had increased by over 7 percentage points to 50%, whilst those who were 'unsure' decreased to 45%.

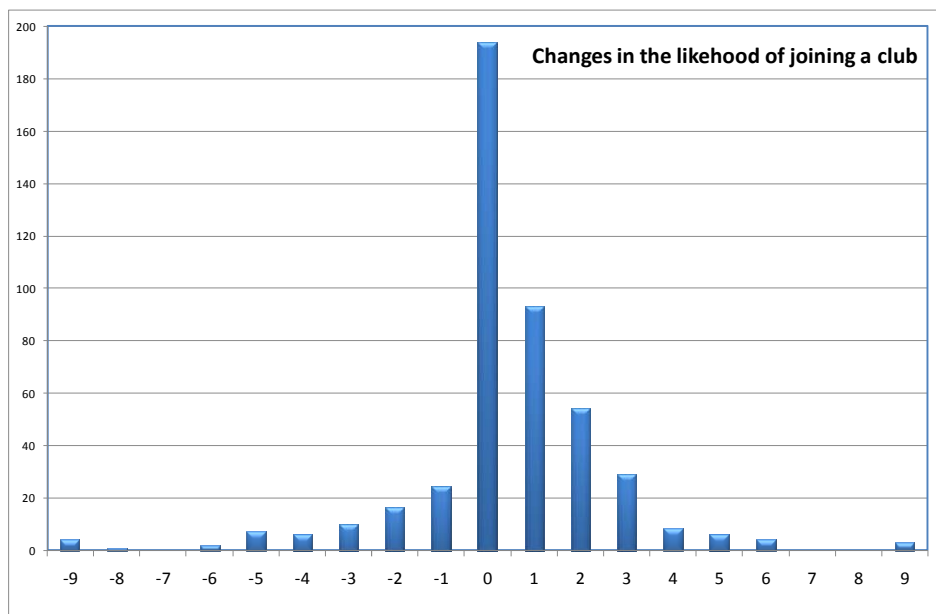
Figure 1.6: Key findings from the 'before and after' surveys - measuring changes in intentions and perceptions of sport

All respondents stating how likely they were to join a club to continue participating and how important they perceived sport to be on a scale of 1-10 - both BEFORE taking part and AFTER completing their 10 weeks of sessions.



The highest proportion of respondents did not change their intentions or perceptions, however 43% of participants had increased their likelihood of joining a club, whilst 28% did view sport as more important.

Figure 1.7: Changes in perceptions measured via 'before and after' surveys





A more detailed look at the results shows that the majority of change has been positive. The mean average response (scored out of 10) has increased from 7.4 to 7.9 and 43% of respondents viewed themselves as more likely to join a club.

5. Summary

The scale and scope of Sport Unlimited so far has been impressive. The summer term has reported consolidation during a challenging period of the school calendar, with 74,501 young people retained in sessions. Sport Unlimited has succeeded in driving a strong commitment to putting the needs of young people at the centre of both planning and delivery. Many CSPs have taken an increasingly strong focus on student voice and signposting and have taken significant steps to shaping their provision to meet the needs of young people.

This report was compiled by the Sport Industry Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University, On behalf of Sport England, October 2009.