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Governance models for sport across the UK and Ireland

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This paper examines the different governance models adopted by the sports councils across the UK and some of the different ways in which local councils deliver their sports services. It includes some information on the relationship between sports bodies and local government.

Key Points

- All of the sports councils in the UK and Republic of Ireland are either non-executive departmental public bodies, or similarly constituted bodies.
- There is some variation in their functions. UK Sport is exceptional in focusing only on elite sporting achievement, whereas all of the others focus on both elite sport and on grassroots participation.
- UK Sport, Sport England and Sport NI do not appear to have any kind of formal or structural relationship with local authorities (or local councils), although both Sport England and Sport NI do collaborate with local councils through the provision of funding, training, and some degree of strategic liaison.
- In contrast, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales and the Irish Sports Council all have regional offices, employ local sports officers with the explicit remit of liaising with local councils, and have set up some form of strategic forum at local authority level, such as Local Sports Partnerships or Local Sports Councils.
- In England and Scotland, it is increasingly common for local authorities to deliver their sports services through third party providers.

Executive Summary

This paper examines the different governance models adopted by the sports councils across the UK, and some of the different ways in which local councils deliver their sports services. It includes a summary of the relationship between sports bodies and local government.

There is a degree of variation in both the remit and role of each sports council. For example, UK Sport is exceptional in focusing only on elite sporting achievement, whereas all of the others focus on both elite sport and on grassroots participation.

UK Sport, Sport England and Sport NI do not appear to have any kind of formal or structural relationship with local authorities (or local councils), although both Sport England and Sport NI do collaborate with local councils through the provision of funding, training and skills, and through some degree of strategic liaison.

In contrast, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales and the Irish Sports Council all have regional offices, employ local sports officers with the explicit remit of liaising with local councils, and have set up some form of strategic forum at local authority level, such as Local Sports Partnerships or Local Sports Councils.

In England and Scotland, it is increasingly common for local authorities to deliver their sports services through third party providers, with around three quarters of councils contracting some form of social enterprise or public-private partnership for this purpose.

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1 An overview of sports councils in the UK and Ireland

The following table provides a list of sports by jurisdiction across the UK and Ireland, along with a description of their constitution and role.

Sports body	Constitution and role
UK Sport	Established by Royal Charter in 1997, UK Sport is a Non-Departmental Public Body directly accountable to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It was established by Royal Charter in 2007, succeeding the Sports Council of Great Britain. UK Sport focuses on elite sport rather than grassroots participation. UK Sport is responsible for distributing National Lottery funds to elite athletes. In 2010 it was proposed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport that UK Sport should merge with Sport England, but this has yet to take place.
Sport NI	Sport NI is an Executive Non-Governmental Public Body established by the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, replacing the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1973. It is responsible for the promotion of both grassroots and elite sport, is a National Lottery funds distributor, and itself runs a number of sporting facilities.
Sport Scotland	Sport Scotland is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body of the Scottish Government, established in 1972 by Royal Charter. It advises ministers and implements government policy for sport and physical recreation at both grassroots and elite level.
Sport England	Sport England is a Non-Departmental Public Body under the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It is a National Lottery distributor and focuses on participation in grassroots sport rather than elite sport.
Sport Wales	Sport Wales is a Welsh Government Sponsored Body (WGSB). It was established by Royal Charter in 1997. It is responsible for distributing National Lottery funds, and oversees a number of national facilities such as the Sport Wales National Centre. It also acts as an advisor to the Welsh Assembly Government. Sport Wales operates at both elite and grassroots level.
Irish Sports Council	The ISC is a statutory authority and was established by the Irish Sports Council Act 1999. It is accountable directly to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport. Its remit is to coordinate both competitive and recreational sport in Ireland.

Table 1: Summary of the role and constitution of sports councils

It can be seen from this table that there is a degree of variation in both the remit and role of each sports council. For example, UK Sport is exceptional in focusing only on elite sporting achievement, whereas all of the others focus on both elite sport and on grassroots participation.

UK Sport, Sport England and Sport NI do not appear to have any kind of formal or structural relationship with local authorities (or local councils), although, as will be seen from the information given below, both Sport England and Sport NI do collaborate with local councils through the provision of funding and some degree of training.

In contrast, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales and the Irish Sports Council all have regional offices, employ local sports officers with the explicit remit of liaising with local councils, and have set up some form of strategic forum at local authority level, such as Local Sports Partnerships or Local Sports Councils.

2 Sports councils and local authorities

2.1 Northern Ireland

Sport and local councils in Northern Ireland

The relationship between Sport NI and local councils is referred to in Section 10 of the Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. This states that ‘each district council shall secure the provision for its area of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical and cultural activities’¹. The legislation goes on to state that it shall be a function of the Sports Council (now Sport NI) ‘on matters relating to sport and physical recreation, to advise the Department and other government departments, education and library boards, district councils and other bodies interested in sport and physical recreation’.

The Department of the Environment has stated that the following two aspects of local sport will be among the functions transferred from central to local government²:

- Local water recreational facilities;
- Local sports (greater involvement of local government in local sports decisions).

Currently, there is no further detail on either of these or what they may entail. Indeed many sports functions, such as the management of local leisure centres, already fall under the category of ‘recreation’ and are therefore under the control of local government³.

Relationship between Sport NI and local councils

The Sport Matters strategy sets out a number of intentions for the improvement of ‘participation’, ‘performance’ and ‘places’⁴. Contained within these strategic intentions are a number of references to local councils.

For example, it is stated that a key ‘step for success’ will be to ‘establish systems and structures that enable improved dialogue between key stakeholders delivering the Strategy at a local level’. It also states that in terms of ‘places’, achieving its vision will require:

Collaborative and more effective deployment of existing resources for sports facility development within and between education, district councils

¹ The Recreation and Youth Service (Northern Ireland) Order 1986: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1986/2232>

² Department of the Environment. ‘Powers agreed by the Executive to transfer to local councils in April 2015’: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/powers_transferring-2.pdf Page consulted 10.1.13.

³ Department of the Environment. ‘Local Government: Powers and functions’: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/local_government/council_structure/powers_and_functions1.htm Page consulted 10.1.14.

⁴ DCAL & Sport NI. 2009. *Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland strategy for sport and physical recreation 2009–2019*: http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sport_matters.pdf

and local communities to close the 'facilities gap' between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

The strategy also highlights, at the time it was published in 2009, 'a lack of effective co-ordination and equitable sharing of resources', 'despite myriad support structures provided by local and central government and governing bodies of sport'. But looking forward, the strategy points to 'the re-organisation of local government and the retention of Sport Northern Ireland'. With these, 'there is an expectation of closer working in relation to community based sport and physical recreation', but 'the success of this Strategy is predicated on a strong, vibrant and dynamic sport and physical recreation in any new district council environment'.

In terms of active collaboration with local councils, Sport NI consulted both the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) and the Northern Ireland Sports Forum (NISF) in the formation of its strategy, *Sport Matters*⁵. It also holds regular quarterly update meetings with the Chief Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), and implements the Activ8 Wildcats Clubs Initiative which is delivered by local councils and supported by Sport NI⁶.

Sport NI distributes funding directly to local authorities under eight different funding schemes, most frequently through the Active Communities fund. In 2012/13, for example, Sport NI provided £9,405,305 to local councils. Over the period from 2010 to 2013, 17 of the councils were provided with funding by Sport NI via eight different funds⁷.

The *Sport Matters* strategy contains a target to increase the number and quality of local sports facilities across Northern Ireland (PL25), and council-owned facilities are likely to form an important component of these.

Other strategic and training roles are also carried out by Sport NI in collaboration with local councils. For example, Sport Northern Ireland delivers 'Coach Education and Development' workshops across Northern Ireland, through clubs, governing bodies and local authorities⁸.

2.2 England

In England, there is little formal liaison between Sport England and local authorities. Indeed, models of sports delivery vary across the complex network of 152 'upper tier' authorities and the 326 'lower tier' authorities.

⁵ DCAL & Sport NI. 2009. *Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland strategy for sport and physical recreation 2009–2019*: http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/sport_matters.pdf: p50.

⁶ Information received from Sport NI following an information request, 14.1.14.

⁷ For example, see Assembly Questions for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, and West Tyrone: AQW 27360/11-15; and North Down: AQW 26931/11-15.

⁸ Sport NI. 'Coaching workshops': <http://www.sportni.net/PerformanceSport/coaching/coachingedworkshops.htm> Page accessed 13.1.14.

For example, in some councils, such as Surrey Heath Borough Council, sports provision is delivered directly by the council, in a similar fashion to Northern Ireland⁹. In other cases, third party providers are increasingly being commissioned by local councils to deliver sport services, often as part of a broader contract involving other leisure services and, in some cases, library provision also. Such arrangements take a variety of forms, including Public Private Partnerships, not-for-profit third sector social enterprises, or mixed economies involving sub-contractor specific aspects of sports delivery to voluntary organisations or others. For example, the social enterprise company 'Better' is responsible for managing more than sixty-five public leisure centres in twelve London boroughs, as well as the Crystal Palace National Sports Centre and the Olympic Aquatics Centre¹⁰.

At the present time, no data exists on the overall proportion of local councils in England which follow such models, though a report (referred to below) on the provision of services in the East of England concluded that 'less than 30%' continue to provide such services in-house.

Out-sourcing of sports services

In 2006, a report by the Audit Commission outlined a number of different delivery options which local authorities had adopted up to that point, also weighing up some of the potential advantages and disadvantages of using a third party supplier¹¹. The Local Government Improvement and Development Agency has produced a toolkit to enable local authorities to appraise the viability of commissioning external services for the delivery of sport and culture, rather than delivering them in-house¹².

A report produced by the East of England Local Government Association in 2011 concluded that 'less than 30% of local authorities within the region continue to operate leisure services in house. Most have outsourced their leisure services to private sector operators or transferred them to leisure trusts'¹³.

One such council is Peterborough City Council. Here, many leisure services, including sport, are delivered by an entirely separate body, Vivacity. Vivacity began operating in 2010 and is an independent, not-for-profit organisation with charitable status responsible for managing most of Peterborough City Council's leisure facilities, including all of the local leisure centres, the theatre, gallery, museum, some heritage

⁹ Surrey Heath Borough Council. 'Local government duties and services': <http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/community/youth/LocalGovDuties.htm> Page consulted 13 January 2014.

¹⁰ GLL: Better for Everyone. 'About us': <http://www.gll.org/b2b/pages/3> Page accessed 10.1.14.

¹¹ Audit Commission. 2006. *Public Sports and Recreation Services: Making them fit for the future*. London: <http://nia1.me/1ub>

¹² Local Government Improvement and Development Agency. 2010. *Improving Strategic Commissioning in the Culture and Sport Sector. Guidance paper 2: Options appraisal, the business case and procurement*. http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=35679095-a2f5-479e-b89f-c943ec0f783b&groupId=10180

¹³ Improvement East. 2011. *A Guide to Externalising Leisure Services*: <http://www.culture-first.com/content/download/1465/8082/2011-03-18+A+Guide+to+Externalising+Leisure+Services.pdf>

sites, and all of the local libraries¹⁴. The council retains a role in its governance structure through the appointment of two trustees on its Board of Trustees. The organisation has a turnover of around £7.9m, with just under half deriving directly from the council as a delivery fee and the rest of from a variety of funders and from customer fees¹⁵. Sport accounts for around 33% of expenditure. Vivacity made a surplus of £78,000 for the year 2011/12.

The Leadership Academy Programme

One of the few formal mechanisms by which local authorities in England interact with Sport England is the Leadership Academy Programme. This is jointly delivered by the Local Government Association and Sport England, and is intended for elected council representatives with responsibility for sport. These academies are designed to provide an insight into sports delivery mechanisms, including the work of each of the national governing bodies¹⁶. They also provide contextual information on the nature of Olympic/Paralympic legacy plans. Since the year 2000, around 2,200 councillors have graduated from the Leadership Academy programme.

2.3 Scotland

Legislation

Scotland is similar to Northern Ireland in having legislation which provides for the delivery of sports services by local government. There are key provisions set out in legislation relating to duties on local authorities for the provision of sport¹⁷. These require them to both determine local need and take account of national objectives. The Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982 (the 1982 Act), section 14(1) states that, with certain exceptions, a 'local authority shall ensure that there is adequate provision of facilities for the inhabitants of their area for recreational, sporting, cultural and social activities'. The 1982 Act, section 15(2), sets out the powers of local authorities to provide sporting facilities and activities.

Guidance produced by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and the Scottish Executive in 2003 included recommendations about the development and implementation of plans for facilities and activities¹⁸.

¹⁴ Peterborough City Council. 'Sport and leisure': http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/sport_and_leisure.aspx Page consulted 7.1.14.

¹⁵ Vivacity. *Annual Report 2011/12*. Peterborough: http://www.vivacity-peterborough.com/files/downloads/1925/Annual_Report_2011_to_2012.pdf

¹⁶ Local Government Association and Sport England. 2013. *Transforming the Delivery of Sport in Local Communities: Elected member leadership academies*. London: <http://nia1.me/1ua>

¹⁷ Scottish Parliament Information Centre paper, *Community Sport*: p20: <http://nia1.me/17c>

¹⁸ COSLA and Scottish Executive. 2003. *Implementation of the National Cultural Strategy: Guidance for Scottish local authorities*. Edinburgh: The Stationery Office.

Scottish Government and Sport Scotland

Sport Scotland works within a regional framework with the intention of linking 'local and national partners to work together to plan for sport in their area, collaborate on the delivery of national programmes and explore ways of developing services in an integrated and complementary way'¹⁹.

As part of this regional focus, Sport Scotland has established six regional sporting partnerships across Scotland. These are based in East Scotland, West Scotland, Tayside & Fife, Central Scotland, Grampian, and Highlands & Islands. Within each of these six regions there are Area Institutes of Sport run by the Sport Scotland Institute of Sport.

The aim is that these Area Institutes of Sport operate as networks that bring together relevant agencies involved in developing high performance sport, such as local authorities, sports governing bodies, and universities.

Service delivery and arm's length external organisations (ALEOs)

At local government level, 20 of the 32 local authorities in Scotland were contracting not-for-profit leisure trusts to deliver sports services on their behalf by 2012. These leisure trusts work independently of councils and are run by boards of trustees. For example, GlasgowLife is responsible for the delivery of library services, the arts, heritage and sport within Glasgow. Its income for the year 2011/12 was £118.6m, including a 'service fee' of £78.2m direct from Glasgow City Council²⁰. As a community interest company, GlasgowLife made a profit of around £1.7m in that year.

A paper produced by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICE) describes the role of these bodies as follows:

These organisations are 'arm's length' because the council retains a degree of control or influence, usually through a funding agreement, and 'external' because they have a separate identity to the council. By their nature they are one-step removed from council control and as a result financial arrangements can be complex. Audit Scotland notes a risk with this approach that service users and local people have less input and influence over how services are provided. There is also the potential for conflict between the interests of the council and the ALEO (the arm's length body).

A report by Audit Scotland in 2011 on the role of arm's length external organisations (ALEOs) in public service delivery highlights an increase in the use of ALEOs. The report suggests that ALEOs do have the potential to offer different and better ways of

¹⁹ Scottish Parliament Information Centre paper, *Community Sport*. p20: <http://nia1.me/17c>

²⁰ GlasgowLife. 2013. *Our Annual Review and Performance Report 2012/13*. Glasgow: <http://publications.glasgowlife.org.uk/annual-review/#1>

providing services, but it also concludes that councils and councillors need to be clear about what the expected benefits are in using an ALEO to deliver services. Audit Scotland notes that this involves the council being able to 'follow the public pound' to the point where it is spent. This requires well thought-through governance arrangements from the outset and action to ensure those arrangements are applied effectively in practice.

Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils

The Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils is a not-for-profit Company Limited by Guarantee which exists to support and represent the views of its member Local Sports Councils. There are around 40 Local Sports Councils, which together represent around 3000 sports clubs. Typically funded by local authorities, these Local Sports Councils are intended to provide a forum for discussion and the sharing of good practice, and to provide a collective voice.

2.4 Wales

Sport Wales refers to a duty to collaborate with local authorities in both its Royal Charter document and in its strategy. It has four regional offices, in Cardiff, Carmarthen, Caernarfon and Deeside. Sport Wales employs a set of regional development officers who work with individual local authorities on the development of Local Authority Partnership Agreements (LAPAs)²¹.

2.5 Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland, most local councils provide sports services in-house. In addition, a set of 32 Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) are coordinated by the Irish Sports Council in collaboration with local councils²².

The purpose of these LSPs is not to deliver the sports services themselves, but to carry out strategy work to target services in particular ways. For example, LSPs often create development plans for local sporting services over a certain period of time, and carry out projects and programmes to, for example, enhance volunteer recruitment or create specific education or training plans. They may also create directories of local sports services and contacts.

Membership of LSPs typically includes the Irish Sports Council, local councils, sports clubs in the area, the Health Service Executive, universities and colleges. Most LSPs employ a full time Local Sports Coordinator.

²¹ Sport Wales. 'What we do': <http://www.sportwales.org.uk/about-us/about-sport-wales/what-we-do.aspx> Page consulted 13.1.14.

²² Irish Sports Council. 'About LSPs': http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/Participation/Local_Sports_Partnerships/About_LSPs/ Page visited 10.1.13.