

INQUIRY REPORT Sheffield Basketball Development Group

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1. Letter from Mike Brady of Sheffield Basketball Development Group

Mike Brady, Senior Coach Basketball, at Sheffield Basketball Development Group, wrote, *"I am writing to you about the current position for sport in state schools today. As a retired Physical Education teacher (Carnegie) and an active basketball coach for over 50 years, I feel qualified to canvass about sport matters. I am circulating my article "We Must All Do More for Sport" widely. I hope that it may have some positive influence for improving the current situation. Anything you can do to raise this important matter for consideration or action would be appreciated."*

2. Submission from Sheffield Basketball Development Group

We Must All Do More For Sport.

State school competitive sport went into a sharp decline during the 1980s. The once vibrant multi-sport programme, supported by teachers, suffered as teachers were required to devote more time to curriculum change and meetings.

Our schools, sports clubs, Sport England (SE), Department of Education (DoE), Youth Sport Trust (YST) and our Sports' National Governing Bodies (SNGB), which I shall collectively call the Total Active Partnership (TAP), need to engage with one another in order to reverse the serious loss of youngsters playing competitive sport today.

The impact on participation levels and elite sport in particular has been catastrophic. TAP need to take a holistic approach which encourages more boys and girls to play regular, competitive sport, rather than the occasional tasters that they get currently undertake via the curriculum.

An increased involvement in competitive sport would facilitate the emergence of much raw talent, which could be identified for transition into clubs, some of whom would progress into elite programmes. We have a population base of 70M+ in the UK. Numerically we should compete with Germany, France and Spain in the international rankings for the major sports. We don't!

This can be attributed to the underdevelopment of talent, the variable progression structures and general lack of quality coaches, who can develop and progress the fundamental skills all our sportsmen and sportswomen need to compete at all levels.

There is a lack of after school sport competition and poor extra-curricular provision in both primary and secondary state schools. In primary schools there is a reliance on private companies, to provide sports activities, which are little more than child minding services. The problem with these companies is that often kids who cannot afford to pay lose out! None of these groups provide any exit routes, nor are their staff involved as volunteers or coaches in any inter school competitions or external club links.

The School Sports Partnerships (SSP) with the aid of their School Sports Organisers (SSO) work to create some element of competition, they must be helped to expand this role, working closely with the schools and sports clubs. This approach places responsibility for engaging children in sport firmly with a few enthusiastic teachers, many of whom lack knowledge and expertise in coaching a sport. Give them some limited training and teachers could provide the essential leadership our youngsters need.

In secondary schools a possible way forward would be to harness the services of all PE teachers, teachers and parents with coaching qualifications as well as club coaches. These schools would also require the services of teams of sports leader volunteers from the pupils/students in Years 10/11, and 12/13 depending on the type of school, using the house system, through which everything is organised.

The private and public schools' competitive sports programme is extremely strong, deemed important and produces the bulk of our top sportsmen and sportswomen. In spite of their efforts our status in world sport is a matter for concern.

Were it not for Lottery funding and the many dedicated parents who support their children playing sport, things

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would be much worse than they are. We often talk about the lack of social mobility in academic opportunities, why don't we appreciate that this also applies to sport as well? Sport is the best opportunity for everyone, regardless of background, to mix freely as equals, enjoying social interaction, responsibility and commitment to house, school, to each other, as well as ourselves.

Why do we ignore the opportunity to encourage and engage our youngsters in worthwhile, purposeful, healthy activity? Surely schools and SNGBs can do something about this? It is the majority of our youngsters who are missing out, with a minority getting all of the advantages life has to offer.

Attitudes need to be consistent too, one minute primary schools can do competitive activity/sports days then it's non-competitive and skills days not sports days. This approach is unreal and does not help youngsters develop survival and battling skills, nor does it help self-determination and accepting responsibility.

Most funding streams and grants insist on additionality, thereby burdening and overwhelming our existing volunteer force. The funding agencies must be more realistic, directing their award criteria towards the sustainment of proven quality programmes covering development from participation through to elite levels. Finding funding for community sports clubs is the most difficult of all tasks. SE and other bodies do not acknowledge the problem. TAPs must do all that it can to convince them that a change is essential if we are to maximise the hidden talent that currently lies dormant.

Let us all band together and do something about this totally unfair situation which promotes the life opportunities of a very fortunate minority. We must all do more for sport!