



## Asda Active Sports Leaders Spirit of 2012



# CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. Context</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Historical Context.....	8
2.2 The Programme Since 2014.....	8
2.3 The Partners.....	9
2.3.1 ukactive.....	9
2.3.2 Sports Leaders UK.....	10
2.3.3 ASDA.....	10
2.4 Additonal Challenges.....	11
2.4.1 The “Political” Context in the Devolved Nations.....	11
2.4.2 Timing of Funding and Delivery.....	12
<b>3. Mechanism</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 A Threefold Progression.....	15
3.1.1 Developing Additional Centres.....	15
3.1.2 Additional Types of Activity.....	15
3.1.3 Working with Different Groups of Young People.....	16
<b>4. Outcomes</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 Challenging Perceptions of Disability.....	17
4.1.1 The Swansea Pilot Scheme, and Roaring with Pride.....	18
4.2 Empowering Young People.....	20
4.3 Engaging Volunteers.....	23
4.4 Improving Wellbeing.....	26
<b>5. Conclusion</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>6. Recommendations</b>	<b>28</b>

## TABLE OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1. Spirit’s Empowering Disabled People &amp; Challenging Perceptions of Disability Outcomes Pathway</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Figure 2: Spirit’s Empowering Young People Outcomes Pathway</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Figure 3. Spirit’s ‘Engaging Volunteers’ Outcomes Pathway</b>	<b>23</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The Asda Active Sports Leaders Programme (hereafter referred to as the 'Programme') is a project funded with £1.5 million from Spirit of 2012. It is a partnership programme between Asda, ukactive and Sports Leaders UK, and builds on previous work undertaken in partnership between the three bodies. As well as the formal partnership between the partners, the programme benefits from a range of other partnerships, formal and informal which add value to the delivery of the project.

Started in April 2014, the aim is to extend the provision of Sports Leader training across the UK, bringing in additional centres targeted at both areas of disadvantage and geographic areas where existing provision is low or non-existent. It also targets groups of people whose take up of the opportunity was low and has extended the provision to include activities outside the affiliated sports scene, such as dance.

The Programme has four identified aims:

- To increase the amount of volunteering delivered by young people across the UK
- Ensure that all regions and communities across the UK receive benefit from this uplift in social action by teenagers
- Elevate the position of Sports Leaders qualifications to stand alongside established movements e.g. Duke Of Edinburgh award, and as a valuable enhancer of employment opportunities
- Better understand the incentives, motivations and mechanics for achieving long term engagement with sport leadership and engender a habit of volunteering or other positive social action.

This evaluation covers the first year of the programme, where the effort was concentrated on bringing new centres into the Programme, training tutors and assessors to deliver the qualifications and awards in those new centres, testing out qualifications with new activities and piloting the delivery of learning targeted at particular groups of people.

## Context

Prior to funding received from Spirit, Sports Leaders UK and ukactive worked in partnership with Asda through Community Life Champions at Asda stores to train Sports Leaders to support local Community Fun Days (now called Asda Active Sports Days) located near Asda stores, and targeted at families with children, and primary schools.

The partners involved in this programme are, ukactive, Sports Leaders UK and Asda. ukactive has over 3,500 members that share the uncompromising vision of getting more people more active, more often in order to improve the health of the nation. Sports Leaders UK was originally established as the British Sports Trust in 1982, and is an accredited awarding organisation regulated by OFQUAL, and a registered charity. Asda is part of the multi-national Walmart group, and in 2012, reinvented its community programme to become Asda Community Life, with a focus on both supporting activities and good causes locally, whilst retaining support for a designated National Charity; together with establishing and consolidating a dedicated Community Life Champion (CLC) in each store.

This programme faced several significant challenges, including the timing of the school year which has implications for implementation because the programme works with youth in school. Additionally the programme has faced the challenge of increasingly divergent policies across the four nations of the UK, where Education, Health and Sports are all devolved matters. In particular, the challenge of persuading educational institutions, who are increasingly under pressure to report higher educational attainments in core subjects for all pupils, of the value of supporting pupils through a vocational programme of activity and volunteering, should not be underestimated.

## Mechanism

The Mechanism used to achieve the outcomes identified for this Spirit programme include developing additional activity, and ensuring more young people participate in the Sports Leaders programme across the UK. Sports Leaders UK is the principal delivery agent for this, and it plans to achieve this through the following threefold progression, throughout the period of the Programme:

- The development of new centres, targeting geographical areas not currently covered, and areas of disadvantage
- The addition of additional types of activity, not related to competitive sport (for example dance or Zumba)
- The piloting and delivery of activity targeted at particular groups of young people, in this case young people with disabilities

## Outcomes

There is ample evidence of young people being empowered by their participation in the programme. This was demonstrated in two ways, firstly, through the testimony of both the young people and others, about the difference the leadership training had made to them; and secondly, through the significant opportunities it gave them as ambassadors for the programme, to influence and inspire others, often at a national level.

There is evidence that participants regularly volunteer above the minimum level required for the qualification, and that they do this in both formal sports based, and community settings.

This project targets Spirit's outcome areas listed below:

- Challenging Perceptions of Disability
- Empowering Young People
- Engaging Volunteers
- Improving Wellbeing

## Conclusion

It is too early to assess the qualitative difference to new participants, as insufficient numbers had completed their learning before the evaluation was completed. This is because the programme is linked to academic providers and so the first “year” ran from June 2014 through the academic year of 2014/15 new academic year to September 2015, and the evaluation was undertaken between April and July 2015. However, it is possible to examine the outcomes for learners on existing schemes run by Sports Leaders UK and observe the value of a pilot project, run under the programme, and targeted at young people with disabilities.

The programme met, and exceeded its quantitative targets, with 236 new<sup>1</sup> participating centres against a target of 151 centres established in the first year. In addition, qualifications were established based on new activities such as dance, zumba etc. (with a view to attracting people deterred by affiliated sports activity) and work to increase the number of participants from disadvantaged groups was piloted.

Although the programme is UK wide, and targets people of all ages, this evaluation focused on activity with young people in Wales, living in areas of disadvantage, or with disabilities.

The evaluation found that young people:

- Reported increased confidence through the programme, with communication skills evidenced strongly
- Gained identifiable skills such as team working, planning, time management and leadership skills
- Had an opportunity to gain qualification (on top of the Sports Leaders UK qualification) which lead directly to employment in the sports and leisure sector, such as coaching and lifesaving qualifications
- Contributed significant hours of volunteering in both sports settings and in community settings, such as youth clubs, and primary after school clubs

1. This includes centres that had previously participated in a scheme, but where the activity had lapsed

- Were recognised as a reliable source of voluntary support by other agencies
- Were given significant chances to experience opportunities outside their own locality, by volunteering at National events
- Raised the profile of the programme by attending high profile events with politicians and decisions makers, e.g. at the House of Lords, the Welsh Senedd
- Had an opportunity to progress from a basic participatory level through to leading e.g. by organising workshops at national conferences, acting as hosts at public events.

Evidence in Wales also showed strong partnerships established, especially between Sports Leaders UK and Sport Wales (the governing body for sport in Wales) through a Memorandum of Understanding, with Disability Sport Wales, (to deliver the pilot project focused on disability) with the National Assembly for Wales Department of Education, to secure the recognition of the qualification as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate and with officers at local authorities and educational establishments to deliver the programme at a grassroots level.

The comment below from the CEO of a ukactive member organisation, encapsulates many of the comments made about the programme.

“The Sports Leaders UK and ASDA programme will be making an outstanding contribution to the leadership of young people and the recruitment of volunteers into sport.”

## Recommendations

The Year 1 evaluation of The Asda Active Sports Leaders Programme identifies the following recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Clarification about delivery periods and associated reporting on beneficiaries should be sought at the beginning of the project.

**Recommendation 2:** The pilot scheme that aims to challenge perceptions of disability should be replicated elsewhere to ascertain the resource needed to repeat this success.

**Recommendation 3:** The project partners should seek to capture evidence of participants' wellbeing as they undertake qualifications and awards through the project.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Asda Active Sports Leaders Programme is delivered as a partnership between Sports Leaders UK, ukactive and Asda. The overall purpose is that the programme is growing the number and diversity of qualified Sports Leaders so as to encourage more young people to get physically active and to promote volunteering by young people. The work includes driving a large-scale awareness raising campaign of the benefits of becoming a Sports Leader – including its usefulness as a pathway to employment in the sports and leisure sector – as well as running a targeted programme of new Sports Leader centres opening across the UK.

The programme is complemented by the work of Asda's Community Life Champions from stores across the UK, who receive Sports Leaders training and go on to run a range of community based activities, including one-off community “fun” days through to extra-curricular clubs in local primary schools which focus on physical exercise and healthy eating.

This case study has examined the progress across the UK, but has focused on the work undertaken in Wales when seeking evidence of impact. It draws on:

- The comprehensive data summaries supplied by partners
- Qualitative data analysis – a systematic approach to coding material from transcripts, documents and interviews
- Published testimonies of young people, including interviews with their colleagues and tutors

The programme builds on a previous partnership project, which is described below under historical context, but which is not being evaluated here.

The young people who have contributed to the case study are not “typical” of the young people who have gained Sports Leaders UK qualifications and awards, rather these are the “gold standard”; young people who, despite facing significant challenges, have, through their participation in the Sports Leaders UK Programme, achieved well above their, and others expectations.

The reasoning behind selecting exemplar projects and individuals is because in this, the first year of delivery of the Spirit funded programme, young people were only partway through their own learning experience as this case study was being completed. As the Spirit funded programme replicates existing good practice of the Sports Leaders UK provision, albeit in different geographical locations, and using additional mechanisms and vehicles to attract young people on to the programme, it is likely that the progress made by the individuals will be similar to that already achieved in the preceding years. The exemplars selected are all young people in mainstream education living in areas of above average deprivation in Wales.

## 2. CONTEXT

### 2.1 Historical Context

Prior to Spirit being fully established, Sports Leaders UK and ukactive worked in partnership with Asda, funded through a Big Lottery Fund grant under the Keeping the Spirit Alive programme. This operated through Community Life Champions at Asda stores training as Sports Leaders to support local Community Fun Days (now called Asda Active Sports Days) located near Asda stores, and targeted at families with children, and primary schools. Local young people who had undertaken the Sports Leaders UK qualification also volunteered at the events in a range of ways, stewarding, organising events and games at the fun days, assisting with promotion etc., whilst the Asda Community Life Champions supported the events with free healthy snacks and drinks, promotion and liaison with local dignitaries. Over 200 events took place in the first year, 2013, and the legacy of this initial programme is that by 2015 7,500 trained and qualified Sports Leaders supported over 61,000 young people participating in Asda Active Sports Days across the UK. This work continues as a separate but complementary project to the Spirit funded project, so a number of young people currently undergoing the qualification and funded through Spirit may volunteer at these events and will also volunteer in other settings.

### 2.2 The Programme Since 2014

In 2014 Spirit awarded a grant of £1.5 million to the partnership of ukactive, Sports Leaders UK and Asda to deliver an enhanced programme of development of the Sports Leaders Programme. Asda makes a significant matched contribution through both its Community Life Champions and promotional activities.

The agreed outcomes for the Programme are:

- To increase the amount of volunteering delivered by young people across the UK
- Ensure that all regions and communities across the UK receive benefit from this uplift in social action by teenagers
- Elevate the position of Sports Leadership qualifications to stand alongside established movements e.g. Duke Of Edinburgh award, and as a valuable enhancer of employment opportunities
- Better understand the incentives, motivations and mechanics for achieving long term engagement with sport leadership and engender a habit of volunteering or other positive social action.



It is doing this through:

- Increasing the numbers of centres where the Sports Leadership qualification is offered, especially in areas of deprivation and where there is currently no provision
- Targeting specific communities of interest, e.g. young women from minority ethnic communities, disabled people
- Re-aligning the qualification to include activities that are not based on competitive sports, such as dance, Zumba, etc.
- Increasing the opportunities to explore sports not normally delivered through the standard school curriculum, such as volleyball and table tennis.

N.B this research is not examining the success or otherwise of the positioning of Sports Leaders UK qualifications in the marketplace, but focusing on Spirit's outcomes areas for participants on the Programme, which are:

- Challenging Perceptions of Disability
- Empowering Young People
- Engaging Volunteers
- Improving Wellbeing

## 2.3 The Partners

### 2.3.1 ukactive

ukactive celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2015 and has over 3,500 members that share the uncompromising vision of getting more people, more active, more often in order to improve the health of the nation. It has extensive experience in bringing organisations together for shared goals, runs an awards programme, provides access to leading behavioural science insight, and its membership includes the leading employers in the activity sector across the length and breadth of the UK.

Asda Active Sports Leaders is one of a number of partnership projects that ukactive supports, and the original partnership developed with Asda generated the Asda Active project, where the delivery of community active fun days, linked to the in store Community Life Champions was the progenitor of this programme. This original partnership also encouraged members of the public to sign up to the Asda Active Panel, an online forum to share information, concerns etc. and added value to the events by encouraging other ukactive partners to support the activities.

### 2.3.2 Sports Leaders UK

Originally established as the British Sports Trust in 1982, Sports Leaders UK is an accredited awarding organisation regulated by OFQUAL, and a registered charity. At the beginning of this project it was training 120,000 learners each year through 6,000 delivery centres across the UK. Sports Leaders can progress through a series of increasingly challenging accredited levels, where learners are assessed through their ability to demonstrate their leadership skills over a specific period of time in an agreed setting. The lack of written work in this qualification, together with the practical aspects, make it an attractive option particularly for those whose experience of formal education has not been positive.

The qualification at every level includes an element of volunteering, and skills developed include organisation, motivation, communication, and working with others, as well as leadership. In addition, some of the courses have a specific affiliated sports focus, so that a learner may gain, or work towards, a coaching qualification in a specific<sup>2</sup> sport. The qualification is delivered to young people through schools and colleges, and to adults through other educational centres, community settings and also in institutions such as prisons. This research focuses on the work done in schools, colleges and community settings with young people.

### 2.3.3 ASDA

Asda is part of the multi-national Walmart group, and in 2012, reinvented its community programme to become Asda Community Life, with a focus on both supporting activities and good causes locally, whilst retaining support for a designated National Charity; together with establishing and consolidating a dedicated Community Life Champion (CLC) in each store.

The CLC role of supporting community activity is combined with their paid post in store, and Asda supports these CLCs with training, time off to undertake the activities and networking with other CLCs to develop their skills and share experiences and learning.

2. Affiliated describes a sporting organisation which has its own governing body, which regulates the activity, trains participants both to take part and to regulate the sport and offers other support and standards e.g issues around insurance etc.

From 2012 the CLCs have been the primary link for the delivery of community events, which had been supported by ukactive, and which provided an opportunity for Sports Leaders to volunteer in their communities. Since then, a number of CLCs have gained a Sports Leader qualification.

Dawn Clements, Head of Asda in the Community in 2013 said:

“Asda Active is our over-arching campaign to ‘Get Britain Moving’ and make it easier for our local communities to lead healthier and more active lifestyles. Last year in partnership with ukactive, we provided a number of free community sports events, helping introduce over 70,000 families across the UK to a range of sports.”

**In addition, Asda seeks to address the concerns of its consumers.**

“Last year, over 5,000 Asda mums told us that their two biggest concerns were about their children’s health and their prospects for employment. When ukactive brought our organisations together, we quickly saw the potential for the Sports Leaders qualifications to address these areas and give a whole generation a positive chance to succeed and improve things for themselves and their communities.”

DAWN CLEMENTS, 2013

## 2.4 Additional Challenges

### 2.4.1 The “Political” Context in the Devolved Nations

This project has the challenge of responding to the increasingly divergent policies across the four nations of the UK, where Education, Health and Sports are all devolved matters. In particular, the challenge of persuading educational institutions, who are increasingly under pressure to report higher educational attainments in core subjects for all pupils, of the value of supporting pupils through a vocational programme of activity and volunteering, should not be underestimated. This can present a challenge for the partners, especially Sports Leaders UK, as they seek to work in partnership with educational establishments to deliver the programme.

There is evidence that Sports Leaders UK is responsive, in terms of education, to both the challenges of meeting the needs of four (devolved) administrations of the UK, whilst also being agile enough to respond to rapidly and ever changing policies. The example of Wales, where the Welsh Baccalaureate, a qualification which has a compulsory community service element, and is an increasing option offered for those studying post 16, demonstrates where there may be opportunities as well as challenges; and Sports Leaders UK has already secured agreement to deliver their core qualifications to satisfy the community element of the Welsh Baccalaureate through the volunteering their learners undertake.

In terms of Health, the Sports Leader UK qualification aligns strongly with health promotion policies in all the devolved nations given the focus on regular activity, and the developing evidence for the increase in wellbeing as a result of participation in regular physical activity. In addition, in Wales the 5X60 programme, a Welsh Government health promotion programme to encourage young people to participate in five periods of activity lasting one hour every week, offers volunteering opportunities for those undergoing the Sports Leader programme, and in this way the project can be seen to align itself with, and deliver results which complement a number of national policies.

However, despite these challenges across the Four Nations, the value of the qualification is already recognised at the highest level. Deputy Minister for Culture Sport and Tourism in Wales, Ken Skates said,

“From leadership and communication skills to boosting confidence and self-esteem, the awards and qualifications provided by Sports Leaders are helping to create the next generation of planners, organisers and innovators to be employed in Wales.”

KEN SKATES

#### 2.4.2 Timing of Funding and Delivery

Although the project began officially in June 2014, because the majority of the delivery is done through schools and colleges, the period between June to September 2014 was used to plan for and prepare the support needed to develop the scheme from the beginning of the academic year in September 2014. The 2014 / 15 academic year has concentrated on developing new centres, upskilling staff and volunteers in those centres to deliver and assess the programme and expanding the programme into new “sports” areas, especially into non-competitive activities such as aerobic exercise. This has meant that the data available relating to actual learners engaged in the project has been limited because of timing.

The partners agreed some challenging targets, not least because these were devised by projecting over the period of the grant, and dividing them equally across the three years, which, given the developmental nature of the project was too simplistic, and this is reflected by the performance to date, and shown in Table 1.

HEADER	TARGET	PERFORMANCE	DIFFERENCE
<b>Volunteering Hours</b>	666,666	410,952	23%
<b>Young Sports Leaders registered</b>	130,000*	95,465	26.5%

**Table 1. Target Performance to Date**

Whilst some of this might have been foreseen, especially the volunteering hour's total, as it takes time to develop skills in order to volunteer, and also develop the volunteering opportunities at new centres, the number of Young Sports Leaders registered reflects a real drop from the existing baseline of 120,000, and so is a greater cause for concern.

## Methodology

This research is not seeking to evidence the value of the partnership work undertaken prior to April 2014 between Sports Leaders UK, ukactive and the Asda CLC staff, nor are we measuring directly the legacy of this work, which is the ongoing community activity organised by Asda and supported at a local level, with Sports Leaders volunteers. For this case study we are examining the evidence from exemplar projects in Wales, together with the testimony of young people for whom the process has been transformational, to demonstrate the potential of this Programme, which we would expect to see evidenced over the next two years and into the future. In addition we spoke to key stakeholders, viewed video evidence of participants' experiences, undertook contextual research and analysed media reports.

The case study is based on the evidence from previous and current work. It is based on how well the programme met, and has the potential to meet, the four core outcome areas identified under Spirit, which are:

- Challenging Perceptions of Disability
- Empowering Young People
- Engaging Volunteers
- Improving Wellbeing

We have examined the programme under each of these four areas, and these are reported in the section below. However, it was noted that the Spirit programme has other aims described in its Outcomes Pathway which were not identified as aims for this project, but were also being met. These included inclusive participation and empowering disabled people. These were not formally evaluated but were noted as being delivered as part of the research.

The over-arching methodology for the research is the Context + Mechanism + Outcomes framework. The detail of each of these is examined in this document.



# 3. MECHANISM

## 3.1 A Threefold Progression

Put at its simplest, the Mechanism used to achieve the outcomes identified for this Spirit programme include developing additional activity, and ensuring more young people participate in the Sports Leaders programme across the UK. Sports Leaders UK is the principal delivery agent for this, and it plans to achieve this through the following three-fold progression, throughout the period of the Programme:

- The development of new centres, targeting geographical areas not currently covered, and areas of disadvantage
- The addition of additional types of activity, not related to competitive sport
- The piloting and delivery of activity targeted at particular groups of young people, in this case young people with disabilities

NB this is not a linear process, with activity taking place sequentially, rather it should be seen as a three pronged approach, with each activity dependent, but not entirely reliant upon, the other.

### 3.1.1 Developing Additional Centres

The target for this element of the Programme was that 151 new centres would be established and ready to deliver courses to young people from September 2015 onwards. The majority of these are schools and colleges, and each location, including key staff needed to be identified by September 2014, and using the academic year between September 2014 and August 2015, began to run a number of courses with young people to ensure they were delivering to agreed standards.

### 3.1.2 Additional Types of Activity

Sports Leaders UK has a good track record of delivering Sports Leadership training based on team and competitive sports. The infrastructure is in place to link with well organised and funded sports such as football, rugby, swimming etc. However, Sports Leaders UK recognised that not all young people are attracted to organised team sports which are part of a larger infrastructure, and so it has sought in this first year to identify other sports, and fitness related activity to use as a vehicle for Young Leader training. Some of these activities are competitive sports, such as table tennis and volleyball, and some are activities such as dance and exercise such as Zumba. In many cases the equipment and knowledge already exists in centres for this type of activity, but it has not been a major contributor in terms of Sports Leadership training.

### 3.1.3 Working with Different Groups of Young people

Sports Leaders UK had already identified that the numbers of Disabled Young Sports Leaders needed to be increased, and a pilot was established and run in the first year to ascertain what would work most effectively with this target group. This pilot is described below. In addition it was recognised that other groups of young people, e.g. young women from a minority ethnic background, were not highly represented in the Sports Leader UK programme, and so a combination of ensuring that some of the new centres will be focused in areas of high ethnic minority populations together with the development of new activities designed to attract young women, will be the mechanism for reaching this particular group of young people.



# 4. OUTCOMES

We preface our commentary on each of the thematic outcomes pathways with a young person's experience of the pathway, and follow this with further information about activity relating to this outcome.

## 4.1 Challenging Perceptions of Disability

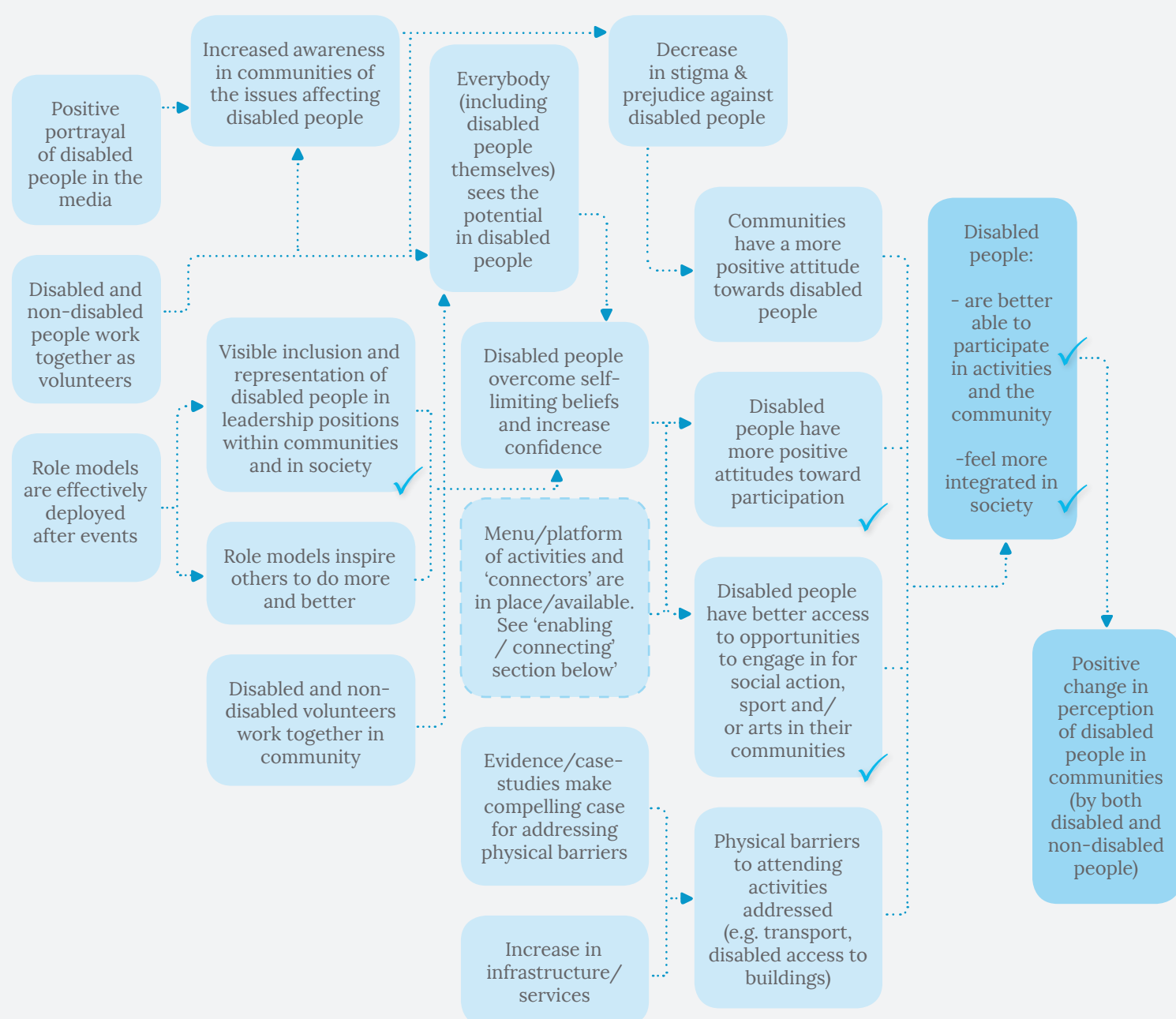


Figure 1. 'Empowering Disabled People & Challenging Perceptions of Disability' Outcomes Pathway

A young man who had developed Motor Neurone Disease (MND), and who was recruited on to the Swansea pilot (see below) addressed a Conference for the Heads of Sport in Wales:

“...I used to play football and rugby and take part in sport and then this (the MND) came on to me when I was about 14 years old and, kind of, I lost the ability to do all the things that I wanted to do and through leadership I got back involved and, you know, if you look at me and look at what I’m doing, then all of you are capable of doing as much as you want to do.”

There was evidence that the Project was able to deliver the following outcomes, evidenced through the pilot scheme described below:

- Young disabled people were visible in leadership positions
- Young disabled people were better able to participate in activities and the community
- Young disabled people felt more integrated in society
- Young disabled people have better access to opportunities to engage in social action and sport in their communities
- Young disabled people have more positive attitudes toward participation.

#### 4.1.1 The Swansea Pilot Scheme, and Roaring with Pride

The Spirit funding enabled Sports Leaders UK to run a pilot scheme, with the specific aim of challenging perceptions of disability. In 2014, Swansea hosted the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) European Athletics Championships, and whilst there was a high proportion of UK athletes, and Sports Leaders UK trained volunteers supported the event in a number of ways; it became patently clear that at this major event for athletes with disabilities, there were no volunteers with disabilities in evidence at the event.



Sports Leaders UK made a positive decision to focus on developing a pilot scheme, in the Swansea area initially, to address this, as Rob Guy, Sports Leaders UK Manager for Wales and the West, explained:

“What we’ve been looking at as a legacy (for the event) is getting a group of young people with disabilities where a programme has been set up which is based around leadership skills development. Young people with disabilities have been recruited on to that, some slightly older people with disabilities, say for example in university, have been trained up to be able to deliver the programme. So, the Spirit funding has allowed them to access training with us and then, the Spirit funding has allowed a contribution towards the cost of training up the young people to become leaders and they will be involved in organising events. And so they undergo a transition from participation to organisation.”

ROB GUY

This pilot project has a strong focus on disabled people as agents of change and has required Sports Leaders UK to examine how barriers can be removed, and by using role models as success stories, promoting young disabled people as leaders in the media and with decision makers.

Although this pilot only operated in one area, it is a good example of how the funding under the Spirit scheme has been used directly to target a key area of focus, in this case to challenge perceptions of disability, both for Spirit, and for Sports Leaders UK. The learning from this pilot, about the additional resource required to pump prime the activity at a local level, the additional barriers facing young disabled people as volunteers, and the value of linking in at an opportune time to major events will inform the development of this part of the project as it is extended across the UK.

This pilot also provides evidence on how an activity with one identified outcome that of challenging perceptions of disability, can meet another two of the core agreed aims of this Spirit funded project. There is every likelihood that this pilot also meets the fourth agreed outcome; that of improving wellbeing, but there was insufficient data to evidence this.

## 4.2 Empowering Young People

Robert Cunnah, aged 16 from Denbighshire, who was awarded the Presidents Cup, given to an outstanding Young Sports Leader said at the House of Lords, where he received the award from Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson.

“ I couldn't have done it without all the great people helping me along the way. I now have a part time job at a sports holiday club in Rhyl leisure centre – sportzone – and have been accepted onto a sport coaching apprentice next year, all thanks to Sports Leaders and volunteering. ”

ROBERT CUNNAH

There is ample evidence of young people being empowered by their participation in the programme. This was demonstrated in two ways, firstly, through the testimony of both the young people and others, about the difference the leadership training had made to them; and secondly, through the significant opportunities it gave them as ambassadors for the programme, to influence and inspire others, often at a national level.

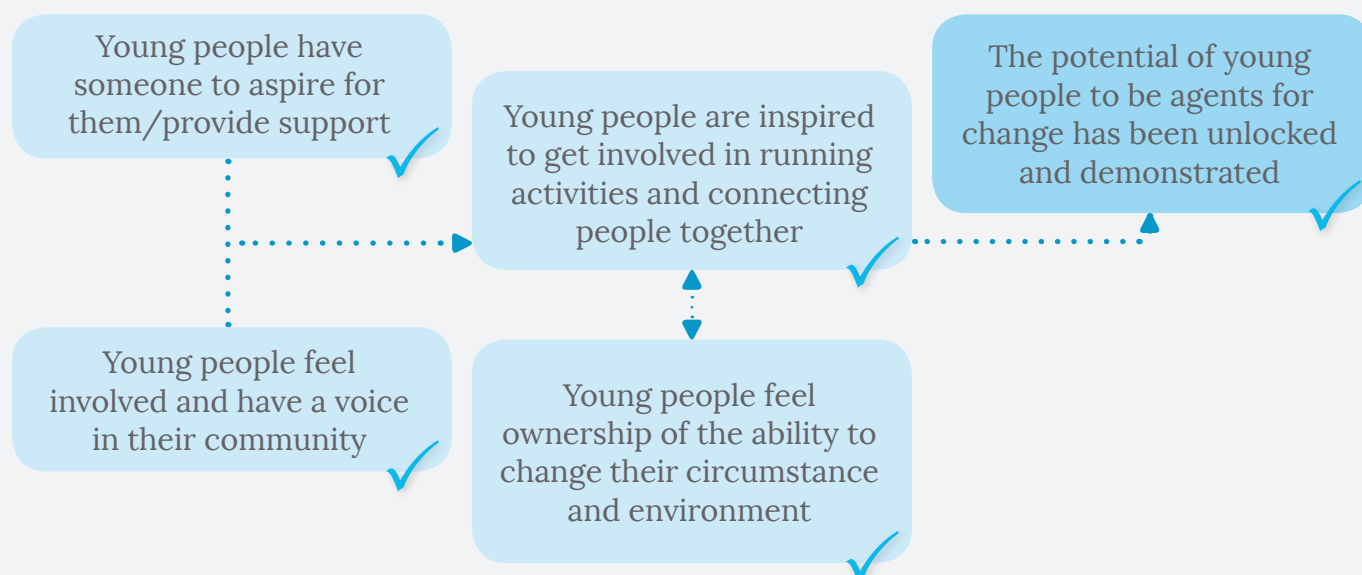


Figure 2. Spirit's 'Empowering Young People' Outcomes Pathway

There were comments from both young people, and their tutors, teachers and supporters that evidenced how young people who had undergone a Sports Leader UK qualification:

- Had an increased voice in their community, often from a position of having no voice at all
- Were engaged in significant, regular and ongoing activities, all of which required them to take some form of leadership role N.B. The scale of the leadership role was relative and appropriate to the age and experience of the young person
- Felt able to change their circumstances
- Understood their own ability to be agents of change.

They demonstrated this through a wide range of activity, from speaking in public at small and large scale events, to working towards formal qualifications and showing commitment above the minimum requirement of any given activity.

Having the confidence to speak up, in both intimate and public arenas is a key skill which empowered the young people in this project, and was mentioned by them very frequently.

Luke Rees, a young Sports Leader from Blaenau Gwent, an area in Wales which scores consistently highly on all the Welsh Government measures of deprivation<sup>3</sup>, including those relating to educational attainment, unemployment, health, smoking and obesity, addressed the Welsh Prime Minister and other Assembly Members at the Senedd in Cardiff about how becoming a sports leader helped him move from being disillusioned with his schooling to becoming motivated, engaged and confident. He acted as the host at this high profile event, and also at an event held at the House of Lords.

**Children as young as primary school age reported their own experiences of speaking up:**

“...doing the Sports Leaders has helped me stand up and speak in front of the class.”

**BOY, AGE 10, DENBIGHSHIRE**

**Young people were able to identify their own empowerment:**

“...I encourage my friends in school to become more active after doing the Sports Leaders.”

**BOY, AGE 9, BLAENAU GWENT**

3. National Assembly for Wales Key Statistics for Blaenau Gwent 2010

And older teenagers also spoke positively, and linked their experience to their future aspirations:

“...the volunteering has helped develop other core skills for me such as organisation, and time management, all of which I can use in the future.”

GIRL, AGE 17, BLAENAU GWENT

Robert Cunnah, the student quoted at the beginning of this section was described by one of his teachers as:

“...really quiet in year 7, he wouldn't speak up for himself.”

However, through ongoing commitment to the Sports Leaders UK programme, he gained the MV200 (a Millennium Volunteer award for those completing 200 hours of volunteering) and has gone on to complete over 450 hours of volunteering now. He has volunteered at football, dodge ball, table tennis and at local sports tournaments. In addition, during the last school summer holidays he volunteered at a local community church which runs a Street Games scheme, combining this with temporary but full time work at a local leisure centre.

The teacher quoted above went on to say:

“...now you can rely on Robert to organise activity, motivate others and be a reliable member of any team.”

This example shows clearly how one young person has been empowered through the Programme, but has also contributed significantly to the engaging volunteers outcome, not only by his own voluntary activity, but also because he has recruited a number of other young people to volunteer, through his actions in developing and delivering workshops and speaking at public events.

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### 4.3 Engaging Volunteers

Below is the extract from the Spirit Outcomes Pathway relating to engaging volunteers:

*More people are inspired and enabled to give their time for the service of others more often. Volunteers can find (or are matched to) suitable, high quality, opportunities to volunteer and are appropriately recognised for their service. There is a consistent view of the value of volunteering in personal and professional development. Enjoyment of the volunteering opportunity and understanding of their own skills / gifts and potential leads volunteers to keep volunteering. Opportunities to volunteer are offered to a wide range of potential participants including young and disabled people.*

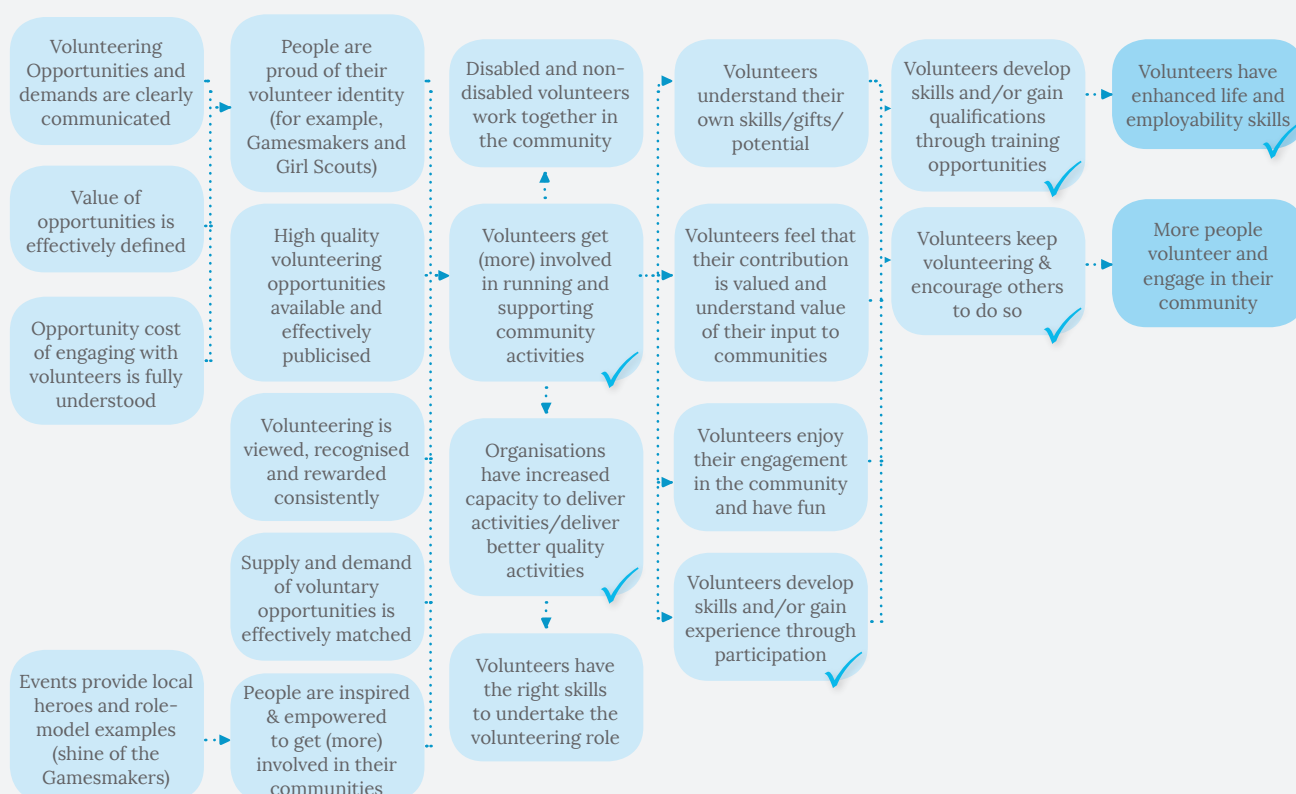


Figure 3. Spirit's 'Engaging Volunteers' Outcomes Pathway

Luke, the young person from Blaenau Gwent referred to above, spoke about volunteering at a National event in Sheffield:

“ Opportunities like these are vital to Young (Sports Leaders) Ambassadors as they don't only provide an amazing experience, but they teach team bonding, team work and responsibilities. When volunteer chances come around you need to take them with both hands and give it your all when applying for them, whether it's a small or large role. At the end of the day you need to be in it to win it and you may win some you may lose some. If you get chosen you take your opportunity and prove what you're capable of, but if you are unsuccessful then you move on and apply for the next one. But whatever happens, you continue to volunteer and to inspire young people to participate in sport, because it's the Volunteers commitment, which will make the difference. The facilities are a means to an end; it's the young people and our commitment which will make the difference to the people participating.”

Because the Sports Leader UK qualification includes a compulsory volunteering element, all participants are engaged in volunteering. There is evidence that participants regularly volunteer above the minimum level required for the qualification, and that they do this in both formal sports based, and community settings. Whilst it is possible to undertake this volunteering exclusively in a sports based environment, such as a community based junior football club, in the main the Sports Leaders are volunteering regularly in a wider range of community settings than that offered by affiliated sports clubs. This can include providing fun “active” sessions in after school clubs in primary schools, supporting community groups with activity sessions, providing stewarding at community events and running sessions for particular groups, such as fitness sessions for young women and girls. Although many of the sessions they support are based on affiliated and competitive sports, such as football, a significant number of the sessions focused on being active, rather than competing in sport.

This project is particularly successful in providing quality volunteering opportunities for young people, which are purposeful, and which they enjoy. The following was evidenced:

- Young people spoke frequently and regularly about their involvement in planning and delivery of community and sports activities
- Some young people showed significant involvement in their communities, on top of school / work commitments

- Voluntary and other organisations explained how the young Sports Leaders enabled them to deliver their core activities/deliver additional activities and/or better quality activities
- Young Sports Leaders, and adults working with them were clearly able to identify the skills they had gained through participation
- Those engaged in the project continued volunteering and encouraged others to do
- Many young people spoke of how they had gained employment / secured a university place which was directly related to the skills learned as a young Sports Leader.

As people progress through the Sports Leaders training the number of hours they volunteer increases, and they contribute significant numbers of hours in total. Some young people had put in more than 1,000 hours of volunteering over the period of their engagement with the qualification, which equates to at least four hours a week on average. All the participants volunteered regularly for at least an hour a week, with many committing considerably more time. The time measured is only the actual volunteering time in supporting or delivering activity, or direct contact with community members, and does not include time spent planning the activity or getting to and from the activity, so the actual time commitment is likely to be significantly greater than that reported.

Of greater significance is the contribution this volunteering makes, both to the individual involved, and to their community.

#### A voluntary Youth Worker running a Youth Club (not sports based) commented:

“...as a voluntary youth centre it's really important that we have sufficient volunteers for our activities, so we refer some of our young people to Sports Leaders and they then support our activities out in the community.”

#### And to the individual young person, this was a typical comment:

“...the volunteering has improved my communication skills and my life skills in general, all of which I'll take with me to university.”

KRISTIE, 18, BLAENAU GWENT (650 HOURS OF VOLUNTEERING)

#### 4.4 Improving Wellbeing

The evidence for improvements in wellbeing has been captured in a survey carried out in December 2014, when most learners would only have been engaged with Sports Leaders for less than three months. This survey has provided a baseline for future years, and Liam Hope of Sports Leaders UK stated:

“ We are looking through some of our research into being able to evidence for how Sports Leadership can support wellbeing and a recent document made some statements around wellbeing and how Sports Leaders felt that being a sports leader and utilising their skills out in the community actually improve their wellbeing.”

He added that further work was being done on this agenda, to ensure that evidence about wellbeing was captured in the future and as the programme developed.

Given the positive way in which all participants spoke about their experiences of the programme, there is every indication that their wellbeing has been increased, if not significantly increased, but because this has not been formally evaluated to date it is not possible to state this categorically.



# 5. CONCLUSION



**The Asda Active Sports Leaders Programme has made a good start in achieving the identified outcomes. It demonstrates that there is the potential to deliver transformational change for young people who participate in the Sports Leaders qualification.**

The evidence from those who have been engaged with Sports Leaders programmes recently is that the range and standard of the qualifications on offer provide experiences that align closely with not only the outcomes identified in the Spirit Pathway for this particular Programme, but other outcomes also, although this was merely noted, and not formally tested.

The Swansea pilot for engaging with young people with disabilities, has demonstrated a model which can be extended elsewhere and brought in, through the linkage with Disability Sports Wales an additional partner to add value to this piece of work. The development over the past year, funded by Spirit, to extend this opportunity to people living in localities previously not participating in the scheme, together with the clear focus to attract those disaffected with competitive sport by offering other activity based experiences, and the focus on specific targeted groups of young people is already showing positive results, however the numbers of participants is disappointingly low. Whilst this may be due in part to timing of delivery issues, partners need to monitor this closely throughout the second year of delivery, and develop remedial action if this proves to be an ongoing trend.

In addition the significant quantity of measurable data available as young people progress through the project will provide robust data to show what works well in terms of targeting specific areas, and groups of people.

As the scheme develops over the next two years there will be the opportunity to examine some longer term benefits to the participants who have engaged since the Spirit funded project began. Specifically, it should be possible to evaluate:

- What the impacts may be for groups “new” to the programme, such as women and girls from minority ethnic backgrounds and disabled people
- Whether basing qualifications on previously untested sports and non-sporting activity (such as dance) achieves similar positive outcomes
- Whether the volunteering activity is sustained outside the minimum needed to acquire the qualification.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The timing of the delivery of this programme has meant an inevitably long lead in period before any analysis of benefit to participants can be undertaken. It isn't clear that all partners understood this from the beginning, and this could have led to misunderstandings and possibly serious repercussions for the grant holders.

- *Recommendation* – clarification about delivery periods and associated reporting on beneficiaries should be sought at the beginning of the project

The pilot working with disabled young people appears to have been very successful, but was small in scale, and benefited from input from a committed regional partner, Disability Sports Wales. It isn't clear if this would have been so successful without a partner or whether partners in the other devolved administrations have the capacity to commit to such a project.

- *Recommendation* – this pilot should be replicated elsewhere, without a partner if none is available, to ascertain the resource needed to repeat this success.

It is highly likely that the wellbeing of participants on the programme will be increased but there was no evidence that this was being measured at present.

- *Recommendation* – the partners should seek to capture evidence of participants' wellbeing as they undertake qualifications and awards through the project. This could be captured quite simply, but to do this effectively it would ideally begin by capturing a baseline measure from September 2015, when the next cohort begins their learning.

