

One of the key legacy outcomes of the London 2012 Games is to inspire more people to play sport. How well is LOCOG meeting these targets?

### *Inspiring Britain to Play Sport*

Sport England has already spent £660m in the realisation of their goal to increase sport participation. However, current figures indicate that participation may have actually fallen during this period. Sport England's funding is only guaranteed until 2011 and in the current financial and economic culture of austerity and budgetary cuts, the need to meet targets and perform is consistently under review. With a failure to meet current targets, particularly amongst minority participants, are Sport England and the London 2012 legacy in jeopardy?



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In 2007, Tessa Jowell commented that "The gold dust of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games could be the way to inspire so many young people to change their lives, to increase their involvement in sport and Arts." Such an idea was motivating and well-timed; during the season of optimism that characterised the post-Games win, Sport England readily embraced the goal of a 2005-2008

3% increase in participation for minorities (women, black and minority ethnic communities, disabled people and those in lower socioeconomic groups).

It is true that Sport England enjoyed some success in meeting these goals, although they did fall short of the 3% target. The National Audit Office (NAO) reported that an extra 520,000 people took part in sport over that 2005 - 2008 period, which could be considered a notable achievement. However, it was also noted that monthly participation in active sport actually fell in all but one of the priority groups over that same time period, with participation amongst women actually falling by 1.6% (9% in London).

Sport England has now revised its goals to focus on increasing the number of people who are engaging in 'moderate intensity sport for at least 30 minutes three times a week'. Their goal is to see this number rise to 1 million, by one million, but minorities are also no longer a specific target. Is this a case of rewriting goals so that they are more obtainable and realistic? Or is this a reflection that Sport England is unable to meet the goals and targets that are funded by the Treasury? It is clear to see where the National Audit Office sits in this particular argument: it concluded in a recent report that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport 'lacked adequate oversight' of Sport England, which itself 'lacked focus' on the priority groups targets, and the public investment did not represent good value for money.'

Whatever the reason for the shortfall, there can be no doubt that our post-emergency budget coalition government will scrutinise the balance sheets of any department or quango that is receiving funding but not delivering on its targets.



### ***START THE DISCUSSION***

- The Treasury funds Sport England. What exactly is the relationship between Sport England, the Government and sports bodies?
- What do you feel are the reasons that minority participation goals have not been met?

### ***FIND OUT MORE***

**National Audit Office: Increasing Participation in Sport**

<http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/1011/sports-participation.aspx>

**CREDITS**

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