



The Scottish
Government

Evaluation of the Cashback for Communities 'Schools of Football' programme

Crime and Justice



Evaluation of the Cashback for Communities 'Schools of Football' programme

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

1. This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the Schools of Football pilot programme. The aims of the SoF, which runs in areas of high deprivation, is to improve attendance, attainment and discipline through providing daily football coaching to young people who are most likely to benefit from participation.

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

2. The aim of this research was to evaluate the quality of the programme as well as its implementation and suitability as a diversionary activity to prevent anti-social behaviour. The objectives of the research were to examine:

- the quality of the programme's organisation and management;
- the effectiveness of procedures for enrolling young people in the SoF programme, particularly if it targets some young people who may be having behavioural problems at school;
- the success of the programme in including equal gender ratios and promoting ethnic diversity;
- the potential impact, if any, of this activity on the young peoples' academic performance and school attendance;
- the reactions of the those young people who applied, but were unsuccessful in obtaining a place in the SoF

The evaluation was also required to identify recommendations and examples of good practice.

Research Methods

3. The research included: questionnaires for the Schools of Football (SoF) participants; their parents/guardians; the SoF coaches; and, pupils who were unsuccessful in getting a place on the SoF. Some interviews with teachers involved with the SoF pupils were also conducted and SoF sessions were observed.

Conclusions

4. The main conclusions of the research were:

- **Evaluation of delivery and impacts**

The SoF is a well-organised programme which is consistently delivered across the six schools. In most of the schools the set-up of the facilities meant that the programme could be delivered with minimum disruption to the running of the rest of the school. For example, playing grounds were situated within the large PE departments of the schools. Alternative indoor arrangements were also available if the weather conditions did not permit play outside. Full kits, including waterproof gear, were provided to each child. Coaches had a supply of a range of equipment which they used during the sessions. In all of the observed sessions, participants and coaches were punctual. Participants were given 5 minutes before and after their sessions to change into and out of their kits. Warm-up exercises were undertaken by the participants both at the beginning and at the end of their sessions. Hydro therapy sessions were also provided to participants once a week instead of their normal football sessions. This took place in the school's swimming pools and helped to aid participants' recovery after a weekend of activity or games away from school.

- **Impact upon participants**

Participants were seen to be enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed to doing well during these sessions. They were seen to follow instructions well and listen attentively to what the coaches had to say. Most of these sessions were geared around improving technical football skills such as passing, shooting, control and finishing etc. All the participants reported in their questionnaires that they thoroughly enjoyed the programme and many said that this was what they looked forward to most at school. The majority of participants said that they did not feel their school work suffered as a result of the SoF sessions but that it made them better organised and better focussed in class. Most of the young people reported that their school work was on target. On the whole the participants held a positive view about their coaches and commented that they had a good relationship with their coaches. Participants suggested that they would prefer longer playing times and for the programme to extend beyond their second year.

- **Attendance**

In all of the schools most of the participants reported that their attendance at school was not an issue. They said that they regularly attended school unless they were sick and that their pattern of attendance had not changed since participating in the SoF. Participants' comments were corroborated by the parents who had completed and returned their questionnaires. Around sixty per cent of parents completed and

returned the questionnaires and nearly all of them reported that their child's attendance was and always had been good irrespective of the SoF programme. However, it must be kept in mind that pupil attendance may have been an issue for the 40 percent of parents who did not return their questionnaires. It could be that these parents were less likely to return their questionnaires to avoid highlighting a problem if there was one.

- **Academic performance**

Similarly, parents reported that their child had had no problems academically before joining the SoF and that this had never been a concern. This was also reported by the participants. Nevertheless, parents did report that the SoF was a positive steer for their children and that they had noticed an improved focus and concentration amongst their children. They also commented that their children were enthusiastic about going to school and were better organised in terms of their school work. Parents were generally pleased with their child participating in the SoF and wanted the programme to be extended.

Since the SoF pupils were in S1 and S2 there were no formal exams such as the standard grade exams to draw upon to assess their academic progress. Similar to primary school reports, the teachers of S1 and S2 pupils assess and mark pupils' attendance, behaviour, homework and progress. The majority of the pupils had either "excellent" or "very good" reports both before and during their time in the SoF.

Teachers also reported that they thought the SoF was a positive addition to the young peoples' lives. Although some teachers said it was difficult to discern between the SoF participants and non-participants because there was no major behavioural problems amongst the young people that they taught both before the implementation of the SoF and afterwards.

- **Selection process**

The selection process for participants in the SoF as outlined in the context chapter appeared to favour those pupils that were already doing well at school and who had unproblematic attendance. There was little evidence that the programme targeted many of those pupils who were struggling both academically and attendance-wise at school. There appeared to be a contradiction in terms of the programme "*getting to the heart of the engaging with young people who are at risk in terms of their social involvement*" as stipulated by the SFA and the criteria that was then set out for pupils to meet in order to get selected. Parents of the SoF participants supported the finding that generally speaking their children were good school attendees and competent in their work. In addition very few parents voiced any concerns about their child having problematic behaviour. The SoF pupils themselves acknowledged that they had no problems with their attendance or behaviour prior to joining the SoF. The coaches provided little indication that

'challenging' young people were targeted during the selection process but that the programme was accessible to all the young people irrespective of their backgrounds.

It is fair to say that those young people who demonstrated a reasonable football ability level were more likely to be accepted onto the programme. This is understandable as the programme and the dynamics of the classes would only be successful if the young person could play by virtue of their keen interest in the game. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the programme was promoted in a way that targeted the more 'hard-to reach' or 'at-risk' young people and those who may have had poor attendance at school and/or struggling "academically.

However, it is important to note that Justice Analytical Services were not involved at the outset so this report can only provide limited insight into the selection process, as this aspect was not observed or explored at the time it happened.

- **Unsuccessful pupils**

Although most of those pupils who filled out questionnaires said they were not affected by not getting on to the programme, they all said that they did not receive an explanation of the reasons why they were rejected. Most reported that they were told about their non-acceptance through a letter that was posted to their home. These pupils said they would have liked to have an explanation.

Recommendations

5. The main recommendations arising from the research are:

- The selection process needs to be presented with more clarity. There are different, and sometimes contradictory, messages about who is selected and on the basis of what criteria.
- In terms of being a diversionary activity it is unclear what the long-term impacts of this programme will be especially if it is primarily being delivered to able pupils who largely come from supportive family networks. Again, this point links in with the previous one about more clarity needed on what kinds of young people are benefitting from this programme.
- More effort could be made in encouraging the participation of more challenging pupils, who may be least likely to apply and to put themselves forward in the selection process. In addition, there appeared to be a lack of ethnic minority pupils in these sessions, which did not always reflect the schools' demographic profiles. Again, more effort needs to be made, perhaps in the form of a campaign prior to the selection process, to interest a diverse range of pupils and in encouraging them to apply.

- Pupils who are not successful in gaining a place on the SoF programme should be given an explanation as to why they have not been selected and also provided with some positive feedback so that morale is not affected.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the Schools of Football pilot programme. The aims of the SoF, which runs in areas of high deprivation, is to improve attendance, attainment and discipline through providing daily football coaching to young people who are most likely to benefit from participating.

1.2 This evaluation was conducted by Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services, on behalf of the Community Safety Unit, Safer Communities Directorate. The findings from this research will be used to inform future programmes of a similar nature and take forward lessons learned from the current programme to help tackle youth offending.

Background

1.3 In 2002 the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) was passed, whereby monies acquired by criminal activity could be seized by the state. The Act allowed the government to take the money and any assets that had been gained by illegal means such as drug trafficking, theft and fraud etc. In June 2007 Ministers announced that they would use the funds recovered from criminals under the Proceeds of Crime Act in a positive way by launching CashBack for Communities, a programme providing a range of positive activities for young people. The Scottish Government is committed to providing opportunities to all young people in Scotland, which it is hoped will enable them to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

The 'CashBack for Communities' programme has been running since 2008. The aim of the 'CashBack for Communities' programme is to use the proceeds of crime to expand young people's horizons and increase the opportunities they have to develop their interests and skills in an enjoyable, fulfilling and supported way. The Government's intention is to support an expanded range of activities for young people that helps their long-term personal and physical development. The activities provided are, where possible, open to all young people, but resources are focussed in those communities which are at most risk of anti-social behaviour and crime. The activities seek to increase the levels of participation in diversionary activities which will aim to help increase the positive long-term outcomes for those who take part.

'CashBack' activity should be:

“positive” - broadly defined as wholesome, healthy, fun, active, engaging etc;

“open to all” - accessible, well advertised, free of charge, of interest to all ages, to both boys and girls, ethnic minorities and young people with disabilities;

“developmental” - changing behaviours and attitudes; developing personal and physical skills; and

“sustainable” - providing medium and long term as well as short term benefits as well as linking into mainstream funding.

CashBack for Communities has aims that cut across Government policy areas and will support the achievement of a range of outcomes identified in the National Performance Framework.

1.4 In 2008 the SFA was awarded £2.238 million from the CashBack for Communities’ fund, based on their proposal for developing the ‘Schools of Football’ and other football-based programmes. The ‘Schools of Football’ is a programme currently being delivered in six schools within Scotland. S1 and S2 pupils are offered a chance to receive football coaching in place of a lesson every day at school.

The grant was awarded with the purpose of facilitating a programme that would get right to the heart of engaging with young people who are at risk in terms of their social involvement.

Aims and objectives of the evaluation

1.5 The aim of this research was to evaluate the Schools of Football programme, including its implementation and its suitability as a vehicle to promote pro-social behaviour. The objectives of the research were to examine:

- the quality of the programme’s organisation and management;
- the effectiveness of procedures for enrolling young people in the SoF programme, particularly if it targets some young people who may be having behavioural problems at school;
- the appropriateness of, and success in, meeting diversity objectives, including gender ratios and ethnic diversity;
- the effectiveness of the programmes as diversionary activities and the efforts made to encourage young people to continue these activities after the end of the young peoples’ participation in the programme;
- the potential impact of this activity on the young peoples’ academic performance and school attendance.
- the quality of the programmes’ internal record keeping and evaluation processes

The evaluation was also required to identify recommendations and examples of good practice.

About this report

1.6 The following section (2) provides an account of the research methods used to undertake the evaluation. Section 3 provides the policy and research context to the evaluation of the SoF programme, including existing, albeit limited evidence about the effectiveness of diversionary activities in potentially preventing young people engaging in anti-social behaviour. Section 4 provides the findings from the participants' questionnaires and provides feedback from those pupils who were unsuccessful at the selection stages of the programme. Section 5 provides the key findings from the parents' questionnaires and Section 6 outlines the main points arising from the coaches questionnaires. Section 8 includes findings from the interviews undertaken with some of the teachers involved with SoF pupils and Section 8 provides some information from the observations component of this research. Finally, Section 9 provides conclusions and some recommendations.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

2.1 The research involved a mixed-methodology, including:

- Questionnaires administered to the:
 - (i) SoF participants;
 - (ii) Parents;
 - (iii) Coaches;
 - (iv) Young people who were unsuccessful in getting a place on the SoF
- Analysis of documentation related to the SoF participants;
- Interviews with teachers involved with young people taking part in the SoF;
- Observations of the SoF sessions in the schools.

Background

2.2 A brief review of the literature was undertaken in order to locate the evaluation of the programme within the context of the existing research evidence about the nature and extent of the problems related with youth offending; the limited evidence available about the impacts of diversionary activities and the key elements reported in the literature of effective 'diversions' as a means to prevent youth offending. Background information about the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) and how the initiative 'Cashback for Communities' arose from it will be described to set the context for this evaluation study.

Questionnaires for SoF children, their coaches, parents and unsuccessful children

2.3 Questionnaires were considered to be the most efficient means of collecting information from these people instead of, for example, one-to-one interviews or focus groups, as it would cause the least disruption to the running of the school. Also information could be gathered from a larger number of people than would have been possible had other methods of data collection been chosen. It should also be acknowledged that it was the most suitable method because of the limited time and resources available, as carrying out in-depth interviews would have required a team of researchers.

(i) SoF Participants

2.4 A key aspect to this evaluation were the responses gained from the questionnaires which were administered to the SoF children, their parents and coaches. These questionnaires helped to understand how well the SoF was being delivered and about some of the impacts of the programme on the children. A copy of these questionnaires is provided in Appendices 1, 2, 3 and 4.

2.5 A total of 104 out of a potential 184 questionnaires were completed by the young people participating in the SoF, 60 were completed by senior one pupils and 44 by senior 2 pupils. Ten of these young people were girls. In terms of the ethnic background of the participants, the majority were White Scottish participants, which did not necessarily reflect schools' demographic makeup. For example, in one school there had been a high influx of Polish pupils yet in the SoF group there were no Polish participants. This may be due to the fact that no Polish pupils applied for the SoF, but since this evaluation research was not involved at the outset of the programme, it is difficult to comment upon how participants were chosen for the SoF. This is not to say that no pupils belonging to ethnic minority groups were selected but perhaps more work could be done in increasing the diversity of the football groups. The pupil questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

2.6 To ensure a maximum response rate the researcher visited all of the six schools and asked the pupils to complete these on the day of the visit. In addition, to ensure that pupils would complete these, the questionnaires were kept simple and short. Questions were non-leading and focussed on capturing pupils' views and experiences of taking part in the SoF. There was a mixture of open and closed-ended questions and some required responses that were selected from a scale of options.

2.7 Baseline details such as their age and gender were collected. The SoF participants were also asked questions about how they felt they were doing at school before they were selected for the SoF and why they thought they were selected. They were also asked about what they most and least looked forward to at school. To try and understand the impact of the SoF programme these young people were asked whether there were any concerns regarding their behaviour before they were selected and whether or not this had been addressed. Since the SoF sessions replaced some curricular classes they were asked whether this affected their school-work. Specific questions were asked about their experience in the SoF. They were also asked how the young people who were unsuccessful may have felt about not getting a place in the SoF. This was in order to get an idea of the broader impact of the SoF in terms of other children. Finally, these young people were asked whether they felt the SoF had changed them in any way or had had a positive impact upon them.

(ii) Parents

2.8 The young people were asked to take home questionnaires for their parents/guardians to complete and return to the school. The response rate from parents was generally good and just over 50 per cent of the questionnaires were returned to the school. Questions to the parents included how their child was

managing his/her school work because of the time taken up by SoF and whether they noticed any changes in them since he/she has been playing football. They were also asked why they thought their child was selected for the SoF given that this programme is generally targeted towards young people who may be having difficulties in terms of their academic performance and attendance at school. A copy of the questionnaire containing further details is attached in Appendix 2.

(iii) Coaches

2.9 Questionnaires were administered to each of the six coaches on the day the researcher visited the schools. The questionnaires to these coaches included questions which explored their views and opinions on delivering these activities. Questions were based around obtaining information on any notable improvement in pupil's football skills, their attitudes toward the activity and other pupils, their attitudes towards the coaches, teamwork and punctuality amongst other things. A copy of this questionnaire is attached in Appendix 3.

(iv) 'Unsuccessful' young people

2.10 In all the schools questionnaires were also distributed to several pupils who had applied to get into the SoF programme but had been unsuccessful. In some instances it was difficult to identify which pupils had applied as the application forms had been filed away. However, some of the teachers and coaches were able to remember who some of these pupils were, which resulted in 13 questionnaires being successfully completed by these pupils across the 6 schools. In these short questionnaires some of the questions included: Why they thought they had not been selected; how they felt about the decision; whether anyone explained to them why they had been unsuccessful and what they did when the other pupils were playing in SoF. Eleven boys and 2 girls filled out these questionnaires and they were all either 12 or 13 years old. This questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4.

Analysis of documentation related to the SoF young people

2.11 Documentation relating to the programme was analysed including: the proposal by the SFA to the Scottish Government; internal evaluation reports; background information on the programme; the content and timetable for the programme; budget and staffing information; and examples of the evaluation forms used internally by the projects; young peoples' school attendance reports; academic reports; SoF 'player folders' (each child had their folder in which their progress in terms of football skills were tracked and targets set); SoF player reviews; skills test results were also all analysed.

Interviews with teachers involved with the SoF young people

2.12 Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school teachers who had young people in their classes that were participating in the SoF. An interview

schedule was used and questions were based around eliciting responses from them with regards to noticing any changes in their SoF pupils since their participation in the programme. The interview schedule is attached in Appendix 4. A total of six interviews were conducted: two with head teachers; two with guidance teachers; and two with PE teachers who had some involvement with these young people. These interviews took place at the time the visits were conducted to the SoF sessions in the schools. Questions to the teachers included: whether they noticed any changes in the SoF pupils in terms of their attendance at school and academic performance; how pupils caught up on the work that they missed when playing football; how they felt the SoF fit within the general running of the school and how it could be improved.

Observations of SoF sessions

2.13 Sessions were observed in each of the schools to see how the programme was being run in practice and to watch how the pupils appeared to engage with their coaches and their peers. The researcher acted as a passive observer and took notes. The SoF sessions were observed in terms of: levels of young peoples' engagement and interaction; the range, and diversity of, different learning activities and opportunities; efforts to involve and include all pupils; the clarity of explanations of tasks and their purposes, young peoples' relationship with their coach; and, their ability to work as part of a team based on their interactions with other members in the team.

Reflections on the research methods

2.14 The limitations of this research should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings and recommendations. This study is a process evaluation and it is not therefore possible to establish the programme's longer term outcome and impacts. Given the lack of outcome data and the lack of comparative financial evidence from other initiatives in Scotland, the assessment of the value for money of the programme is limited.

2.15 The research did not include interviews with pupils or parents as this would have been much more resource and time-intensive to do so, although most of the participating young people and many of their parents completed questionnaires. Questionnaires were the preferred method of data collection rather than one-to-one interviews as this method was likely to cause the least disruption to the young peoples' and teachers' school routine.

Consent and Confidentiality

2.16 Before approaching the schools for their permission to evaluate the SoF, permission was sought from each of the Directors of Education within each Local Authority in writing. Once this was achieved each school was sent a letter explaining the purpose of the research and permission was sought from the head teachers to undertake the evaluation in their schools.

2.17 Parents of the young people participating in the SoF were sent a letter providing details of the research and explaining that if they had any objection to their child

taking part in the research then they had the option of 'opting' them out by completing and returning a form.

2.18 In the information page accompanying the questionnaire it was explained to the young people that they had a choice over whether they wanted to fill the questionnaire or not. Similarly the coaches also had an option of opting- out. None of the young people and coaches refused to complete the questionnaires at this stage.

2.19 Participants were assured that the answers they provided would be kept confidential and their anonymity would be protected. In this report no names have been provided and the names of the schools that have participated in the SoF have not been given to reduce the likelihood of participants being identified.

Data Analysis

2.20 Data was collected from all of the 6 schools hosting the SoF. The pupils' questionnaire results were collated using a simple excel table for their age and gender. Other questions invited a more open-ended answer from pupils for example, "How does the football affect your school work?". The answers to these questions were read and coded into different categories. The different categories were defined by the data in other words similar answers were grouped together and in this way common themes in the data were identified.

3. SETTING THE CONTEXT

3.1 This chapter provides some more detail about the SoF programme and sets it within the context of the Cashback for Communities initiative and the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

3.2 The Schools of Football (SoF) is a pilot programme which provides a group of first and second year high school pupils with an opportunity to play football every day during school hours. One lesson during the school day is replaced by an SoF session for the selected children, during which a qualified SFA coach teaches them football skills and techniques within the school premises. The Schools of Football programme is based on the Bellahouston School of Sport model¹ and the Scottish FA's current Academy programme at Falkirk and Edinburgh.

3.3 The SoF programme is one of the many programmes funded by the 'Cashback for Communities' initiative. In 2002 an Act called the 'Proceeds of Crime Act' was passed which allowed for assets and cash to be recovered from criminals and unlawful conduct. It has been growing in use since 2002 as the authorities have adapted towards the new powers. 'Communities' are the focus of the Scottish Organised Crime Taskforce's "Letting Our Communities Flourish" strategy and this is another reason why monies seized by the police from criminal activities are being reinvested back into the communities.

3.4 In 2007 the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill, invited applications for funding derived from POCA. This programme was named 'Cashback for Communities' and it was claimed that the government would be fully supportive of the agencies they deemed to be appropriate for fulfilling the objectives of this programme.

3.5 CashBack for Communities aims to provide a wide range of positive activities for all types of young people, ranging from those who are simply bored and have nothing to do up to the higher end target group who are frequently involved in anti-social behaviour and low level criminal activity. Activities range from low-level diversionary work such as football, rugby and basketball activities to more long term potentially life changing intervention projects which aim to turn an individual's life around.

3.6 The long-term aim of CashBack is to contribute towards achieving the national outcomes of the Scottish Government as they relate to Justice, but it also links in with health via increased physical activity amongst young people and informal education on the benefits of healthy eating and the dangers of drink and drugs.

¹ ://www.glasgowschoolofsportbellahoustonacademy.co.uk/Curriculum.htm

What is youth diversion and what does it do?

3.7 There have been several varied approaches to tackling youth crime in the UK, some strategies attempt to reduce opportunities for crime (situational crime prevention). This includes target hardening (physical security of properties, (increased surveillance e.g. CCTV, improved lighting, neighbourhood wardens etc), making it easier to trace stolen goods (property marking); and eliminating situations in which crimes occur (for example paying wages by cheque rather than cash). These methods have been shown to reduce crime using 'before' and 'after' measures (Adamson, 2003). Other approaches tackle underlying risk factors. Adamson (2003) reports that a combination of interventions very early in a young person's life is likely to be most effective in the long-term in tackling the risk factors identified in the development of youth offending. Approaches to divert young people from offending is what the 'Cashback for Communities' initiative hopes to achieve.

3.8 Youth diversion initiatives such as 'Cashback for Communities' attempts to prevent offending by providing alternative activities and facilities for young people. In theory, diversionary activities will encourage young people to occupy their time positively, for example through the provision of street football and other activities, rather than hanging around on street corners or engaging in criminal behaviour. Although the focus of these initiatives is on "at risk" young people, it may be that all the young people in the community will benefit. Some effects of youth diversion are likely to be immediate in providing alternative occupation for young people.

3.9 There has been little rigorous evaluation of youth diversionary activities projects both nationally and in the UK generally and, there is currently little more than anecdotal evidence which demonstrates the effectiveness of such projects in reducing crime and disorder. In terms of the potential cost-benefits of diversionary activities the Audit Commission (2009) report that such projects are cost-effective. A young person in the criminal justice system costs the tax-payer £200,000 by the age of 16, but one given support to stay out costs less than £50,000.

Young people and diversionary initiatives through Cashback

3.10 Key to Cashback's success are the numerous activities that are being implemented across the country in conjunction with key stakeholders. It is hoped that these activities will provide genuine opportunities for young people to get involved in their community and in turn provide an alternative to anti-social behaviour.

3.11 'Cashback for Communities' is informed by an understanding that sport and leisure activities have an important role in preventing anti-social behaviour. Research has indicated that the most common reasons given by young people which compel them into anti-social behaviour are material gain, excitement, enjoyment or to relieve boredom (Adamson, 2003). For young people having nothing to do can be the trigger for anti-social behaviour. A wide range of risk factors predict offending and anti-social behaviour but no one factor can be said to 'cause' youth offending. Risk factors cluster in the lives of some young people while protective factors are absent. Risk factors are generally identified as a lack of education and employment

opportunities and of parental support and drug problems. Crime is particularly high amongst those excluded from school.

3.12 Although Cashback for Communities is theoretically open to all people, it is directed towards those areas or young people from areas, where crime and antisocial behaviour is higher than average.

Cashback stakeholders and projects

3.13 There are a number of Cashback stakeholders that the Scottish Government have involved in order to meet with the delivery of these activities. These stakeholders include:

- Scottish Football Association (SFA)
- Scottish Rugby Union (SRU)
- Basketball Scotland
- Scottish Sports Futures
- Youthlink
- Arts and Business Scotland

The Scottish Football Association (SFA) were successful in their bid to the Scottish Government that involved five main projects:

- Schools of Football (SoF)
- Bank of Scotland Midnight leagues
- Street football
- Bank of Scotland – Soccer one, two and three.
- Volunteer development

3.14 This report is concerned with the evaluation of the Schools of Football. Schools within the six SFA regions of Scotland and who were interested in hosting the SoF were asked to apply to the SFA in 2008. Six schools in Scotland (one in each of the SFA regions) were chosen to host the programme. These schools were chosen because they were situated in an area of high deprivation and would include pupils from disadvantaged communities. In addition, the school's facilities had to be appropriate to accommodate the daily football sessions. The SFA acknowledge that this was a difficult decision as many schools applied and the enthusiasm they

demonstrated was “amazing”. It was not an easy task settling on the six schools as many high quality applications were received.

Aims of the SoF:

3.15 The aim of the SoF is to: “deliver an athletic programme, which will recruit the best disadvantaged young football talent at age 11 and provide an individualised programme that will enhance the young participants’ educational, physical , psychological and social development”. (SFA).

3.16 In addition to hosting the programme in schools within disadvantaged areas, the SFA state they have used the following criteria to target young people: identify and involve those young people into development programmes who may not otherwise have the opportunity; target young people who are non-attendees at school and academically non-achievers; and, young people who are active and have football/sporting potential.

3.17 The purpose of SoF is to develop the skills of these youngsters because the skills that apply to football such as communication, following instructions, being creative and be able to solve problems can be applied to the situation in a classroom, in the playground, at home or in the street. Participants from the appropriate cluster schools are given the opportunity to apply and then a process of finding those who would gain most from the experience begins.

Selection process

3.18 Scottish FA coaches lead the selection of young people and football training aspects of the programme, but they do this in collaboration with school teachers, active school co-ordinators and football development officers.

3.19 Pupils are made aware of the initiative in primary seven. In order to be selected to participate, interested pupils must complete an application form and take part in two trials. According to the SFA in most cases the criteria for selection are based on a number of factors such as the participants’ ability, their character and attitude, academic ability and social circumstances. The SFA claim that the programme is not designed to find the next best talent to come out of the country so it may not always be the most talented students who participate.

“This programme will get right to the heart of engaging with young people who are at risk in terms of their social involvement.” [SFA]

Another point that the SFA emphasises is that participants need to demonstrate a good level of commitment and the desire to play and improve, as inclusion involves a daily routine of training which can be demanding for even the most passionate of players.

3.20 In addition, the pupils underwent the following assessments:

- Skills Tests
- Physical Tests
- Meetings and references from teachers/coaches
- Meetings with parents/guardians and young people
- Observation of games/training

3.21 In a recent report by the SFA, in a section entitled “**who are we looking for?**”, they state that:

“The 3 year programme will be exciting but demanding, enjoyable but requiring focus so it’s important that in applying, you bear in mind that there are a few requirements we need to see from the pupils both in the selection process and at school if successful in the application:

- An enjoyment of the sport
- A commitment to school work
- A good level of behaviour at all times
- A reasonable ability level”

In addition to hosting the programme in schools within disadvantaged areas, the following criteria (as identified in the Scottish Government contract) were also used to target young people:

- Identifying and involving young people into an enhanced development programme who may due to their background not necessarily have the chance
- Targeting young people who are non-attendees at school and academically non-achievers
- Young people who are active and have football/sporting potential.

3.22 According to the SFA, the SoF offers a range of activity, both physical and psychological, to help develop individuals. SFA staff coaches lead the selection and football training aspects of the programme but it is very much a partnership with school teachers, active schools co-ordinators and football development officers.

3.23 Throughout the programme, participants have the opportunity to be 'talent identified' by senior clubs involved in the Scottish FA Youth Initiative programme. This offers a pathway for participants into senior football and the long-term possibility of a career in the game.

How does the SoF work?

3.24 The programme is delivered to S1 and S2 pupils. A licensed Scottish FA coach is employed specifically for the SoF and is responsible for the daily delivery and coordination of the project. Coaching takes place during school time after an appropriate timetable has been developed by the school. In most cases one subject is replaced by the football. The subject replaced varied from school to school. Support is provided to the pupil by the teaching staff to enable the pupil to catch up with their school work.

3.25 The content of the daily coaching has 4 main components which focus on the development of:

- technical skills (passing, shooting, control, finishing)
- tactical skills (defending, attacking 4v4)
- physical skills (stamina, strength, speed, agility)
- mental skills (mental strength, focus, discipline).

3.26 Participants also received aqua therapy sessions once a week, usually on a Monday, to help with the recovery of sore and tired muscles especially if these young people had been playing football at the weekend.

In the table below an example of how a typical timetable for these young people participating in the SoF would look like:

	8.55- 9.50	9.50- 10.40	10.40- 10.55	10.55- 11.50	11.50- 12.40	12.40- 13.40	13.40- 14.35	14.35- 15.30
Mon							SoF	
Tues				SoF				
Wed								SoF
Thurs		SoF						
Fri	SoF							

*Taken from SFA report 2009

Analysis of documentation related to the SoF children

Attendance Records

Attendance of 2008/2009 SoF pupils compared with the S1 average

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6
SoF Attendance	96	96	96	97	95	98
S1 Attendance	93	91	91	94	92	92
Difference in terms of number of days	8 days	13 days	13 days	8 days	8 days	17 days

*The names of the schools have been kept anonymous in the above table and throughout the report to ensure that data cannot be traced back to the individuals who took part in this research

3.27 In the example given in the table it can be seen that there was an improvement in the school attendance rates of the SoF pupils compared with the non-SoF pupils. The SFA appears to have had a positive effect on school attendance. It is worth mentioning that most of the SoF pupils did not necessarily have problematic attendance, a situation which is supported by parents' feedback in the

questionnaires. However, it should also be noted that not all the pupil's parents returned their questionnaires and it may be that the parents of those pupils who were doing well were more inclined to complete it.

3.28 In some of the schools the attendance records were examined for some of the pupils before they took part in the SoF, and then after they had begun taking part. Through a brief before and after comparison it was possible to see how attendance rates compared for the SoF pupils. There appeared to be a very small difference, if any, in attendance for most pupils although there were a few young people whose attendance had a marked change before they took part in the SoF and after participation.

3.29 Nearly all the pupils who participated in the SoF had good attendance and there appeared to be no evidence that suggested that any of the young people were struggling to attend the sessions or school. Pupils had to demonstrate a commitment in terms of attending everyday or they could risk losing their place in the team. Since all the young people greatly enjoyed the sessions they worked hard and their attendance rates were excellent.

3.30 In three of the schools some of the pupils' academic reports were examined at the time the researcher visited the schools. Some brief comparisons with pupils who were not in the SoF revealed that there was not a marked difference between their performances. However, this preliminary finding would need to be further researched to reach firm conclusions.

3.31 Initially the SFA attempted to evaluate the programme themselves however due to a lack of resources and expertise they were unable to use a consistent methodology across all six schools. However, despite the limitations in their data collection the overall messages resonate with some of the findings from this evaluation, namely that the: SoF was a positive aspect in the young peoples' lives; parent's seemed happy with the way their children were progressing both in the SoF and in school and the children were enjoying the experience.

3.32 SoF players' folders were also examined during the school visits. They contained information on pupils' progress in terms of their physical performance, guidance on how to eat healthily and targets for skills tests. Pupils also added to these folders by putting in details, including pictures, of their favourite professional football players and why they thought they were good.

SoF pupils also underwent a player review in which factors like their football technique, movement, attitude, teamwork and attendance were assessed both by the coach and by the pupils' parents. Some of these reviews were examined, and again the comments were very positive about most of the young people and attendance was termed as "excellent" for the majority of them in these reviews. This tallied with the players' views about their experiences in the SoF.

4. PUPILS' VIEWS ON TAKING PART IN THE SOF

Introduction

4.1 This section of the report highlights the main findings arising from the questionnaires that were completed by the pupils. This section will be divided into three parts which reflect the main themes that arose from the questionnaire data. These themes are: pupils' views and experiences of the SoF; the effect of SoF on their school work; and, any changes they have noticed about themselves as a result of SoF.

4.2 A total of 104 questionnaires out of a potential 184 were completed by a mixture of S1 and S2 pupils who were taking part in the SoF. Participants were asked to fill out these questionnaires in all of the six schools. Most of the SoF classes consisted of boys aged between 12 and 14 years. There were around 20 female participants, and some of the observed SoF classes consisted of boys only.

In the next section participants' views and experiences of taking part in the SoF will be described. The questionnaires were designed with the aim of capturing as much information as possible from the participants in the limited time available to them during their busy school schedules.

4.3 All of the 104 participants who completed the questionnaires said that they enjoyed playing in the SoF. The majority of these participants said they looked forward to coming to school because of the SoF. Many of the participants considered the SoF to be their favourite 'subject' at school. Some of the second year participants reported that they would like these football sessions to continue until sixth year, and some expressed sadness that their time in the programme was nearly coming to an end. All of the pupils said that would like to carry on playing football as part of their daily school routine.

4.4 Some of the reasons pupils provided in explaining why they enjoyed playing in the SoF were as follows:

Participants reported that the SoF was "*fun*" and that they enjoyed being outdoors getting some air instead of "*being stuck in a classroom.*" Some participants said that it made school-life enjoyable because the SoF broke up their day. These participants also reported that the SoF was preferable to working in classrooms and "*out of textbooks*". Many participants said that the football helped to build their confidence and gave them an opportunity to learn something new everyday. Participants also said they enjoyed SoF as it got you out of other classes, particularly "*boring*" subjects.

Some pupils said that the skills they picked up from SoF aided their football playing technique when they played for other groups/teams such as the schools' football team. Some pupils specified particular games such as 4v4 games and 2x2s attacking that they enjoyed the most during this activity.

Other participants said that the activity made them more "*street-wise*" and encouraged them to mix with people they would not otherwise have met. This was

particularly the case with one high school, where participants gathered together from several different schools to play there because of the outdoor playing facilities that the school had to offer.

Some participants said they liked the SoF because it also encouraged them to play football outside of school *“instead of drinking and doing other stuff”*. One pupil said that football had replaced some of the negative behaviours he had adopted outside of school.

Participants also said that because they spent a lot of energy playing in SoF they would be less likely to misbehave during their time in the classrooms. Some found the SoF *“tiring”* and *“exhausting”* but said that it helped to improve their fitness levels.

4.5 Most of the participants reported that before they participated in the SoF they were doing reasonably well at school and that they had few problems with their school work, attendance and behaviour at school before they were selected for the SoF. These participants also said that the SoF enhanced the way they performed at school because they had to be more organised, and if they fell behind in class they would risk losing their place on the programme. Some said it helped them to focus on their school work better because they were keen to stay in the football group so they would work hard at school. Three participants said that before SoF they used to roam about the streets and do *“bad things”* (as one player put it).

4.6 Some participants referred to the healthy eating and nutrition-related information that they received as part of the SoF programme. Some of these participants reported that they had changed their eating habits and were making healthier choices so that they could perform better at football. One pupil said:

“It has kept me going to try and become a professional footballer instead of going out and eating junk food.”

4.7 Some pupils said they felt *“happier”* since they joined the SoF and other participants reported that they were better organised as a result of the demands of the SoF. One player said *“it helps you get organised quicker”*. Another player reported that *“it had finally made them understand about teamwork.”*

4.8 Although very few, there were some reservations about playing in the SoF. Two participants reported that they disliked playing in the cold. Four participants said that they had to work quite hard to catch up with their school work because of the SoF. One player reported feeling frustrated and was considering dropping out of the programme because there was too much *“catch-up work”* to be done.

4.9 However the majority of participants reported that the SoF had very little impact on their school work and that there was ample opportunity to catch up on the classes that they missed. Generally, participants said that they worked harder during class to catch up. Some said they had to catch up at home and over half of the participants said they caught up on work during lunchtime or during the mid-morning break. One pupil reported that the work he missed due to the SoF was e-mailed to his mother so he could catch up on it at home.

4.10 Participants were asked about their views and impressions of the coaches that led the SoF classes. All the participants gave enthusiastic answers about their coaches. For example comments such as *“fantastic”*, *“terrific”* and *“amazing”* were commonly offered. Participants seemed to value their coaches’ sense of humour and the fact that they could *“have a banter with him”*. Many also said that while you could *“muck about with the coach”* he was strict when it came to teaching football techniques and instilling discipline into them. Participants also reported that they were impressed by the amount of knowledge their coaches had and their ability to pass on some of their knowledge in a *“fun”* way.

4.11 Participants were asked why they thought they were chosen for the SoF and why others were not. The reason why this question was asked was because the pupils provided another perspective on the selection process for the SoF, in addition to the information gathered from the school staff, parents and the SoF coaches. Many of the participants said it was simply because there was not enough spaces in the groups. Some participants also reported that some of the pupils that applied were not *“really bothered”* about performing well at the trials and some pupils said that some of their unsuccessful peers lacked stamina, ability, skills and the speed to be successful in the trials. Most participants reported that their unsuccessful peers bounced back quickly after the rejection news but two boys commented that some of their peers took it quite hard. For example one boy commented that one of his friends was jealous because he was not selected to play and was saying *“bad stuff”* about the SoF.

4.12 In response to the question which asked why they thought they were selected, participants offered a range of answers. Some participants said it was because they were already good football players and could benefit from improving. Other participants said it was because they had a good attitude towards their work and demonstrated commitment in terms of their willingness to be part of the group. One player said he was chosen because he had a *“talent for football”*.

Feedback from unsuccessful pupils

4.13 In all the schools, questionnaires were also distributed to several pupils who had applied to get into the SoF programme but had been unsuccessful. In some instances it was difficult to identify which pupils had applied as the application forms had been filed away. However, some of the teachers and coaches were able to remember who some of these pupils were, which resulted in 13 questionnaires being successfully completed by these pupils across the 6 schools. In these short questionnaires some of the questions included: why they thought they had not been selected; how they felt about the decision; whether anyone explained to them why they had been unsuccessful; and what they did when the other pupils were playing in SoF. Eleven boys and two girls filled out these questionnaires and they were all between 12 and 13 years old.

4.14. Over half of the pupils said they were not chosen because they were not good enough or did not perform well on the day of the trials. One pupil said that he did not know why he was not chosen and the other pupils said that there were not enough places in the group which is why they did not get through. Most of the pupils

reported that they were “not bothered” about not getting a place, but some reported that they felt quite upset.

4.15 The unsuccessful pupils were asked whether someone had explained to them why they did not get on to the programme and all the pupils reported that no reason was given when they were told that they had not got through. Most of these pupils said that if they got another chance they would apply to get on to the SoF programme again.

5. PARENTS' VIEWS OF THE SOF

5.1 Questionnaires were distributed to SoF participants' parents by asking the participants to take home a questionnaire for them and then asking them to bring the completed questionnaire back into school. A total of 60 questionnaires were completed across the six schools. Some of the questions in the parents/guardians' questionnaire included: why they thought their child was selected for the SoF; how they felt about their child taking part; the effect of the SoF on their child's school work; any noticeable changes in their child's behaviour since they started playing in the SoF.

5.2 Parents of the SoF participants reported a number of reasons why their child had been selected for the SoF. The majority of parents reported that their child had been chosen at the trials because they had demonstrated a *"natural ability at football"*. Parents also described their child as having *"potential"* and *"talent"* when it came to football. One parent said that his son had a:

"Talent for football and the coaches can see potential in certain kids and he just happened to be one of them".

Another parent commented:

"He was picked because he had natural ability and talent."

And another said:

"because he showed some football/sporting talent."

5.3 Another reason commonly reported by parents was that their child was selected because of their academic performance. As one parent put it:

"I think they have a chance of being picked up if they work hard."

According to these parents, how the young people performed at school mattered in the selection process:

"I think he was included because he is skilled and interested in football as well as behaving and coping with his school work".

Several parents commented that their children had had "good" school reports in primary 7 which they understood to be one of the criteria to get onto the SoF programme.

5.4 As well as having football skills and a good academic record, parents also reported that their child was selected because they were generally well behaved in school. One parent said:

"My son was chosen because of his good behaviour, attitude, ability and willing to listen and learn also his attendance, attitude and good all round reports".

Nearly a third of parents said that their child demonstrated “*good behaviour*”, which they felt helped in the selection process.

5.5 Although none of the parents reported that their child was having difficulty in school before the SoF it must be borne in mind that many parents did not return their questionnaires and thus the view represented here may not be entirely representative of all SoF participants’ parents. However it is difficult to discount that a fairly large proportion of parents offered the information that their children were selected into the SoF the basis of talent, behaviour/ attitude and academic ability.

5.6 Parents were also asked how they felt about their child participating in the SoF and the general consensus was that they were very pleased that their child had been selected and that it was a good opportunity for them. One parent reported that:

“It has helped with his confidence, self-esteem and really helped with his transition from primary to high school.”

Many parents said they felt proud and privileged that their child had been chosen, for example:

“I feel proud as football is what his passion is in and he has wanted to be a professional since he was 5 years old. This may help him achieve that.”

Other parents viewed the scheme as an important part of school progression. Generally parents reported that they were very happy that their child was part of this unique sports opportunity.

5.7 Parents were also asked how their child was coping with the schoolwork as a result of taking part in the SoF. Just over 30 parents answered that the SoF had made no difference to their child’s performance at school. A few parents said that taking part in the SoF had made their child more focussed on their school work as they knew that they would be dropped from the group if their school performance suffered. Parents also said that the SoF helped their child become better organised and one parent reported that her son had drawn up a homework timetable to help him be organised and keep on top of his work. Only one parent reported that her son sometimes found school work a bit of a struggle when he had to catch up on missed classes.

5.8 Parents were asked if they had noticed any changes in their child as a result of taking part in the SoF. Nine parents reported that they noticed no difference in their child. However, some parents did say they noticed changes in their child especially in terms of their football skills. Other parents reported that they noticed their child’s fitness had improved. Many parents also reported that their child’s confidence had increased since taking part in the SoF. Other changes in these young people that were reported included increased maturity, better organisational skills, better focus at school, improved behaviour and that they were better disciplined. Some parents also said that their child’s commitment to homework had improved and that they had started to enjoy school. Another change that was noticed by several parents was that their child was making healthier food choices because they wanted to improve their performance when playing football.

5.9 In terms of attendance, 95 per cent of parents who returned their questionnaire said that their child's school attendance rate was very good before the SoF and it remained unchanged since they started playing in the SoF. Five percent of parents reported that their children attended school more regularly than before.

5.10 Parents were also asked about how the teachers at their child's school thought their child was getting on in terms of their academic performance and behaviour. Most of the parents reported that if they got any feedback from their child's teacher it was mainly positive and that the SoF was having no adverse affect on their school-work. Several parents reported that their child was doing well at school before the SoF and that this level of performance continued. However, to the contrary one parent said:

"He was a handful at primary school so the fact he has had no bad reports from secondary means things have improved."

Another parent said that their child's performance in the SoF was "great" but his behaviour was letting him down.

Many parents also provided feedback from their child's school reports and said that the comments they received were "very positive" and "exemplary" in some cases.

6. COACHES' VIEWS OF THE SOF

6.1 All six coaches were provided with a questionnaire to complete. The questionnaires included questions about the criteria for selecting participants for the SoF. It also included questions about participants' behaviour and attitude and their perceptions of the benefits or drawbacks of this programme.

Criteria for selection

6.2 In the questionnaires the coaches were asked how participants were selected for the SoF. One coach explained that the selection process involved two trials and in the first, pupils' technical ability, physical literacy, game awareness and attitude was assessed. The coaches said that they looked for a commitment and a good level of interest in the game and also a "fairly good" ability to play football. The second trial includes an interview with both the parent and player during which commitment from both the parents and pupils is assessed. Another coach added that pupils' school reports were also taken into consideration to review their behaviour, attendance, attainment and attitude. One coach added that it was not an "elite programme".

In terms of the benefits of the SoF from the coaches' perspective one coach said:

"This programme has given some potentially awkward children the opportunity to interact, gain confidence and gave them a purpose to turn up to school everyday"

Another coach reported that the SoF was well integrated within the current school system. Another coach said:

"The pupils in a football sense have improved greatly across the board which the skills tests have shown".

6.3 All the coaches pointed out that they saw an improvement in participants' self-confidence and sense of responsibility, which was demonstrated by the way in which they managed to keep on top of their class work most of the time and fit in time for the football.

None of the coaches reported anything negative about the SoF and most again emphasised that the pupils were on top of their class work so the football was beneficial. They expressed strong views about the benefits of the SoF. For example one coach said:

"Pupils are enthused to attend school and to perform to the best of their ability academically".

"I have seen a real progression in these youngsters' development. They obviously show improvement in footballing ability, but there are so many life lessons which can be learned through the playing the game. It is the vehicle which we can use to engage young people and teach so many other skills to."

The coaches all conveyed that attendance at school for these participants had been above average during the SoF programme. One coach explained that the SoF was

not just about football but they would also be educated in 'healthy living' so advice on nutrition and body conditioning was provided on a regular basis.

The coaches could provide many anecdotal examples of participants who came from a challenging background and how they have used SoF as an incentive to come to school and to become self-disciplined.

"This programme has developed these kids into fit, well-mannered and socially acceptable individuals."

6.4 The coaches were also asked how they thought the pupils who applied for SoF but were not successful felt about not being invited to take part in the programme. This question was important since the SoF takes place on the school premises during the normal curricular day. The pupils who were not selected would be mixing with their SoF peers so it is important to understand the effect of this programme on these pupils as well. The coaches were asked this question because they were involved in the selection process and were responsible for letting pupils know that they were unsuccessful. Thus their experiences are important information in helping to evaluate the selection process.

6.5 All the coaches acknowledged that pupils who did not get onto the programme would initially be disappointed. One coach said that pupils are used to competition and know that there are going to be winners and losers so learn to get over such setbacks quickly. One coach reported:

"Children who are not successful are offered coaching at lunchtime to give them an opportunity to play football."

Another coach reported that these pupils have the option of playing in the S1 school team and soccer one.

Another coach said:

"Pupils would be disappointed to not get on to this potentially life-changing opportunity".

6.6 In conclusion, even though the coaches talk about transforming pupils' lives for the better and helping those who have been struggling at school there is little evidence in their accounts that during the selection process participants' personal background, economic and social difficulties are taken into account. It appears that the selection process requires participants and parents to demonstrate a certain level of commitment and sense of responsibility before they are likely to be successful. However, during my informal chats with the coaches whilst observing some of the SoF games they pointed out several pupils who came from challenging backgrounds and had really used the SoF to their advantage to help keep them on-track and focussed despite the difficulties they experienced at home.

7. INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOLTEACHERS

7.1 Teachers were interviewed as and when the opportunity arose during the visit to each of the schools. Six teachers were interviewed which included two guidance teachers, two class teachers and two PE teachers. All the teachers were generally enthusiastic about the SoF programme. Some teachers explained that the majority of young people participating in the programme were not necessarily challenging or difficult pupils and some were performing well academically, but that these pupils benefitted from the “positive change” that the SoF programme offered. Some teachers explained that the SoF was beneficial because they found that some of these pupils had become better organised and more focussed in terms of their school work since they had been participating in the SoF. This finding resonates with what many of the players’ parents reported. Importantly, teachers also reported that pupils’ awareness about healthy eating had also increased.

7.2 One guidance teacher said that it was difficult to tell if these pupils had changed as a result of SoF because none of the SoF pupils that they taught came with a history of problems. Others felt that if SoF was no longer offered then the pupils would not be as focussed, and that even the academically competent pupils benefitted as it gave them an incentive to work even harder. Teachers felt that the SoF was a good means of promoting healthy lifestyle choices.

7.3 One PE teacher commented that grouping together only those pupils who demonstrated difficult behaviour may not be conducive to the programme and it may not be successful. He suggested that pupils learn from their peers and that the group needed able and well-supported pupils so that good examples are set to young people who may be challenging in their behaviour.

7.4 Other teachers such as PE teachers offered contradictory comments saying that most of the young people that were selected were performing poorly academically or came from deprived backgrounds. Another PE teacher commented that pupils who are selected are not necessarily even that fit. For example a P.E. coach told me that some young people struggled to keep up with the demands of SoF because of their weight problems and opted out of the programme. A teacher commented that one of the pupils participating would “*be in jail if it wasn’t for the SoF*”.

7.5 Teachers reported that attendance rates of pupils participating in the SoF were slightly higher than those of non-SoF participants.

Equality and diversity

7.6 One PE teacher suggested that the school was considering holding girls only trials in order to re-dress the imbalance between the girls and the boys.

7.7 In one school there was a relatively high number of Polish young people because of recent immigration patterns, however this was not reflected in the background of SoF participants. Overall there appeared to be a lack of ethnic minority pupils in the SoF programme.

8. OBSERVATIONS OF THE SOF

8.1 Three out of the 6 schools were chosen for observations and these schools were chosen in terms of their class sizes, for example one class had 13 pupils and another had 21, both were observed to see if the difference in class size affected how the sessions were run. The other school was selected because it had the most girls (3) in their sessions. The schools that were observed had good outdoor playing facilities which easily accommodated SoF. Since the playing grounds were separate there appeared to be no interference with the rest of the school.

8.2 Many different activities took place in these sessions which aimed to improve participants' football skills. There appeared to be excellent communication between the participants and the coach. Discipline was maintained throughout the whole session. It is worth noting that it is likely that the researcher, by virtue of being there and observing the sessions, may have influenced the way the participants performed.

8.3 Warm up and down activities were observed in all the sessions which included stretching and jogging. The participants also received aqua therapy sessions which usually took place on a Monday in each school.

8.4 The participants interacted with each other well and appeared to respect each others' opinion. There was no sign of conflict and most of the participants listened quietly when the coach spoke to them. Team work was promoted by getting the participants to take part in group activities.

8.5 Participants were punctual and all of them had their kits with them. The sessions finished between 5-10 minutes before the end of the school period to enable participants to get changed and get to their next class.

8.6 Waterproof equipment is provided in addition to the participants regular sports wear so they could play outside in light rain.

8.7 The coaches ensured that each player was equally involved in the session. The coach offered praise and encouraging remarks to the participants consistently and created a good atmosphere.

8.8 In some of the sessions that were observed girls were playing although in very small numbers. They were hugely outnumbered by the boys. However, they appeared to interact with the other participants well and took part equally in the session.

8.9 The coaches and the participants appeared to have a good relationship and participants were seen to approach their coaches with any questions or queries they had with ease and confidence.

8.10 Overall, the impressions gained from observing the sessions were positive. The sessions were well delivered and the participants demonstrated enthusiasm, discipline, team working skills and a desire to do well in the sessions. The coaches were also enthusiastic and passionate about teaching these participants to the best

of their abilities. The participants clearly respected their coaches and looked up to them as positive role models.

9. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarises the assessment of the delivery and potential impacts of the SoF programme, drawing out the key conclusions, and making recommendations for how the programme could be improved.

Evaluation of delivery and impacts

9.1 The SoF is a well-organised programme which is consistently delivered across the six schools. In most of the schools the set-up of the facilities meant that the programme could be delivered with minimum disruption to the running of the rest of the school. For example, playing grounds were situated within the large PE departments of the schools. Alternative in-door arrangements were also available if the weather conditions did not permit play outside. Full kits, including waterproof gear, were provided to each child. Coaches had a supply of a different range of equipment which they used during the sessions. In all of the observed sessions, participants and coaches were punctual. Participants were given 5 minutes before and after their sessions to change into and out of their kits. Warm-up exercises were undertaken by the participants both at the beginning and at the end of their sessions. Hydrotherapy sessions were also provided to participants once a week instead of their normal football sessions. This took place in the school's swimming pools and helped to aid participants' recovery after a weekend of activity or games away from school.

Impact upon participants

9.2 Participants were seen to be enthusiastic, highly motivated and committed to doing well during these sessions. They were seen to follow instructions well and listen attentively to what the coaches had to say. Most of these sessions were geared around improving technical football skills such as passing, shooting, control and finishing etc. All the participants reported in their questionnaires that they thoroughly enjoyed the programme and many said that this was what they looked forward to the most at school. The majority of participants said that they did not feel their school work suffered as a result of the SoF sessions but that it made them better organised and better focussed in class. Most of the young people reported that their school work was on target. On the whole the participants held a positive view about their coaches and commented that they had a good relationship with their coaches. Participants suggested that they would prefer longer playing times and for the programme to extend beyond their second year.

Attendance

9.3 In all of the schools most of the participants reported that their attendance at school was not an issue. They said that they regularly attended school unless they were sick and that their pattern of attendance had not changed since participating in the SoF. Participants' comments were corroborated by the parents who had completed and returned their questionnaires. Nearly all of them reported that their child's attendance was and always had been good irrespective of the SoF programme.

Academic performance

9.4 Similarly, parents reported that their children had had no problems academically before joining the SoF and that this had never been a concern. This was also reported by the participants. Nevertheless, parents did report that the SoF was a positive steer for their children and that they had noticed an improved focus and concentration amongst their children. They also commented that their children were enthusiastic to go to school and were better organised in terms of their school work. Parents were generally pleased with their child participating in the SoF and wanted the programme to be extended.

Since the SoF pupils were in S1 and S2 there were no formal exams such as the standard grade exams to draw upon to assess their academic progress. Similar to primary school reports, the teachers of S1 and S2 pupils assess and mark pupils' attendance, behaviour, homework and progress. The majority of the pupils had either "excellent" or "very good" reports.

9.5 Teachers also reported that they thought the SoF was a positive addition to the young peoples' lives. Although some teachers said it was difficult to discern between the SoF participants and non-participants because there were no major behavioural problems amongst the young people that they taught.

Selection process

9.6 The selection process for participants in the SoF as outlined in the context chapter appeared to favour those pupils that were already doing well at school and who had unproblematic attendance. There was little evidence that the programme targeted many of those pupils who were struggling both academically and attendance-wise at school. There appeared to be a contradiction in terms of the programme "*getting to the heart of engaging with young people who are at risk in terms of their social involvement*" as stipulated by the SFA and the criteria that was then set out for pupils to meet in order to get selected. Parents of the SoF participants supported the finding that generally speaking their children were good school attendees and competent in their work. In addition very few parents voiced any concerns about their child having problematic behaviour. The SoF pupils themselves acknowledged that they had no problems with their attendance or behaviour prior to joining the SoF. The coaches provided little indication that 'challenging' young people were targeted during the selection process but that the programme was accessible to all the young people irrespective of their backgrounds.

It is fair to say that those young people who demonstrated a reasonable football ability level were more likely to be accepted onto the programme. This is understandable as the programme and the dynamics of the classes would only be successful if the young person could play, by virtue of their keen interest in the game. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the programme was promoted in a way that targeted the more 'hard-to reach' or 'at-risk' young people and those who may have had poor attendance at school and/or struggling academically.

9.7 However, it is important to note that Justice Analytical Services were not involved at the outset so this report can only provide limited insight into the selection process, as this aspect was not observed or explored at the time it happened.

Unsuccessful pupils

9.8 Although most of those pupils who filled out questionnaires said they were not affected by not getting on to the programme, they all said that they did not receive an explanation of the reasons why they were rejected. Most reported that they were told about their non-acceptance through a letter that was posted to their homes. These pupils said they would have liked to have an explanation.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 The main recommendations arising from the research are:

- The selection process needs to be presented with more clarity. There are different, and sometimes contradictory, messages about who is selected and on the basis of what criteria.
- In terms of being a diversionary activity it is unclear what the long-term impacts of this programme will be, especially if it is primarily being delivered to able pupils who largely come from supportive family networks. Again, this point links in with the previous one about more clarity needed on what kinds of young people are benefitting from this programme.
- It is not sufficient to simply allocate the SoF programme to those schools which are situated in deprived areas. This is not a guarantee that the more challenging pupils will naturally come forward. More effort could be made in encouraging the participation of more challenging pupils and those from difficult backgrounds, who may be least likely to apply and to put themselves forward in the selection process. In addition, there appeared to be a lack of ethnic minority pupils in these sessions, which did not always reflect the schools' demographic profiles. Again, more effort needs to be made, perhaps in the form of a campaign prior to the selection process, to interest a diverse range of pupils and in encouraging them to apply.
- Pupils who are not successful in gaining a place on the SoF programme should be given an explanation as to why they have not been selected and also provided with some positive feedback so that morale is not affected.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOF PARTICIPANTS

Hello!

Thank you for helping us with this questionnaire

By answering these questions you will help us to understand more about the ways in which the school of football has made a difference to your life.

Your answers will be looked at by the research team and by no-one else. They will not be seen by your parents or teachers or coach. There is no need to write your name on the questionnaire. After you have filled it in, you can put it in the envelope provided and seal it.

Please take your time to read each question carefully in turn and answer it as honestly as you can. Remember that we are only interested in your opinion. It is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.

You have a choice - you do not need to fill this form, if so, simply hand this blank form back to me.

The questionnaire begins on the other side of this page.

First - a few details about yourself

Are you a:

1. Boy girl (please tick)

2. Your age is _____

3. How were you doing at school before you became a player in the school of football? Please write your answer

4. Why do you think YOU were chosen for the school of football?

5. What do you most look forward to when you come to school?

6. What do you least look forward to when you come to school?

7. Since you've been taking part in the football is your school work: (please circle)

better worse the same

8. Were you having problems attending school before you took part in the football?

Yes

no

9. Were you having problems with your behaviour before joining the football?

Yes

No

10. Do you have to catch up with school work because of football? (please circle)

Yes No

11. When do you catch up with the class work that you have missed because of football?

Do you find this (Please tick)

Easy to do?

Difficult to do?

12. What do you like most about the football sessions?

13. Is there anything about the schools of football that you would like to change?

14. What do you think about your football coach?

15. Do you think other boys and girls in your class would like to take part if they got a chance? (Please tick)

Yes

No

16. why do you think a lot of boys and girls didn't get into the football?

17. Do you think coming to school of football has changed you in any way? Please tick

No

If yes in what way?

18. Has the football changed the way you work at school?

19. Do you think you are different out of school because of the football?

20. Is there anything else you would like to write below

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Questionnaire for parents/guardians

Please read this information sheet as it has important information that involves your child.

This questionnaire has been given to you because your child is taking part in the 'schools of football' programme that is running in his/her school.

The **Scottish government** would like to understand more about how this programme is running and the possible effects of it on your child. Since you have a main role in your child's lives you are best placed to pick up on any changes in your child's behaviour which may be linked to the football training they are receiving in school.

Confidentiality - You are not obliged to fill out this questionnaire but if you do please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential and will be shared with no one other than the Scottish Government research team.

Your view is very important to us and by filling this questionnaire it will help us to improve these programmes and possibly offer it to more children.

Please take the time to fill this questionnaire it should take you no longer than 15 minutes.

QUESTIONNAIRE

1) Are you the child's father/ mother/other, please say?

2) How long has your child been attending the football at their school?

3) Why do you think your child has been included in the school of football?

4) How do you feel about your child taking part?

5) Have you noticed any changes in your child since he/she has started the football? Please circle

Yes No

If yes, can you provide an example

6) Since the football has your child been going to school (Please tick)

More regularly than before ?

The same as before ?

Less regularly than before ?

7) Has the football had any effect upon your child's school work?

No

Yes, briefly explain

8) How is your child coping with their homework?

9) How easy/difficult does your child find it get organised for school and the football?

10) Have you noticed any change in your child's eating/sleeping patterns?

11) Have you noticed any other changes in your child ?

12) Have your child's teachers said anything to you about your child's performance and/or behaviour at school?

13) Do you think the number of football sessions per week are: (please circle)

Too many just right too few

14) How do you think the school of football can be improved?

Thank you very much for completing this, please could you put the questionnaire in the envelope provided and send it back to school with your child or alternatively hand it in to the school office.

If you have any questions about this research please get in touch with Naureen Ahmad Tel : 0131 244 4972

e-mail: Naureen.ahmad@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOF COACHES

Questionnaires for football coaches

Dear Coach

This questionnaire has been given to you because you coach some of the young people who are currently participating in the schools of football. The Scottish government would like to understand how this programme is running and the possible effects of it on the pupils who are taking part. Since you have a main role in delivering the programme you are best placed to see how pupils are reacting and behaving in these sessions.

Confidentiality - You are not obliged to fill out this questionnaire but if you do please be assured that your answers will be kept confidential and will be shared with no one other than the Scottish Government research team. Your view is very important to us and by completing this questionnaire we can gain a better idea about how this programme is running and it will also help to inform the government's decision to offer this programme to more young people in the future.

The questionnaire should take you no longer than between 10-15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire begins on the other side of this page.

Firstly, Some general information

1) Are you

Male?

Female?

2) Your age is _____

3) How long have you been a coach for the school of football? _____

4) How many times a week do you coach? _____

5) How many young people do you coach? _____

Now, more about the schools of football

6) What criteria is used to choose the pupils for the football?

7) what are you looking for in young people during the selection process

8) How are pupils who are not chosen told that they have not been successful?

9) How do you think these pupils felt?

10) How do you feel the football is running?

11) What are the positive points about it?

12) What are the negative points about it?

13) Do the young people attend regularly? Yes/ no

14) Why do you think the young people come along?

15) What do you think they learn from the football?

16) Have you noticed any difference in the pupils' behaviour since they first started?

17) If yes can you please provide an example - for confidentiality reasons please do not write the names of any pupils.

18) If you have noticed positive behaviours in pupils do you think these will continue even when they move on from the football? Briefly explain why, please?

19) Can you comment on the quality of relationship between the Pupils during football

20) Do you ever experience any difficult behaviour from any of the pupils?

If yes, please can you briefly explain.

If No please tick here _____

21) Is there anything you would like to say about pupils' punctuality and attendance to these sessions?

22) Do you think the football impacts upon other aspects of the school timetable, please provide a brief comment.

23) How do pupils catch up on the school work they have missed due to football?

24) Do you have any issues and concerns they had around the organisation of these activities?

25) Is there anything you would like to change/improve about football sessions, please comment.

26) Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNSUCCESSFUL PUPILS

Hello!

Thank you for helping us with this questionnaire.

I would like to know your views on not taking part in the school of football.

By answering these questions you will help us to understand more about your experience and if it has made any difference to your life. Some boys and girls in your class who didn't get to take part in the football are being asked to fill this questionnaire.

Your answers will be looked at by the research team and by no-one else. They will not be seen by your parents or teachers. There is no need to write your name on the questionnaire. After you have filled it in, you can put it in the envelope provided and seal it.

Please take your time to read each question carefully in turn and answer it as honestly as you can. Remember that we are only interested in your opinion. It is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.

There are 10 questions in this questionnaire so it wont take long promise!

First - a few details about yourself

Are you a:

1) Boy girl (please tick)

2) Your age is _____

3) Were you interested in becoming part of this schools of football team?

Yes

No

4) why do you think you were not chosen?

5) How did you feel about this?

Sad not bothered upset ok

6) Do you still have any of these feelings?

7) if you had another chance would you choose to take part in the football?

8) Did someone explain to why you didn't get through? (please circle)

Yes who was this person _____

No (skip question 9)

9) Did you agree with his/her explanation

10) what do you do when the other kids are playing football during school?

11) Is there anything that you would like to add?

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