

Unified Action Diversifying Sport Governance

Evaluation Report (March 2024)

Produced by the Youth Sport Trust Research and Insight Team



Contents

- 1 | Introduction & Context
- 2 | Outcomes Achieved
- 3 | Pilot Legacy
- 4 | Conclusions
- 5 | Outputs Produced



1. Introduction & Context



Introduction

Unified Action – Diversifying Sport Governance (DSG) is an action research pilot, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, and delivered by the Youth Sport Trust (YST) in partnership with 2-3 Degrees and Sporting Equals.

The pilot was led by young people from racialised communities, responding to the injustice of underrepresentation in sport governance – promoting their voices to challenge and change structural inequality and achieve greater diversity in sport governance and wider society.

Unified Action DSG worked towards achieving...

- ✓ Inclusive cultures embedded in sport governance to ensure young people feel valued, respected and empowered
- ✓ Defined accessible leadership pathways for young people into governance of sport
- ✓ Effective representative youth voice within governance of sport

The pilot did not have tightly defined KPIs, rather it was flexible and fluid in its design to allow young people to influence and respond to emerging findings.



Introduction

The following two groups have worked intensively together as part of Unified Action (UA) DSG:



UA Changemaker ‘Advisory and Action’ Panel (“Changemakers”)

Youth Voice and Co-creation: to empower/establish young advocates from racialised communities to drive change.

This panel comprised of eight young people from racialised communities who not only determined the shape of the pilot, but also worked as advocates for change across the sport sector.



National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) / sports charity

Structure and Culture: to create a context for change and develop leadership pathways for young people from racialised communities.

As part of the pilot, we worked with three NGBs and one national sports charity; these organisations then worked and consulted with up to three young leaders within their organisations.

The UA Changemaker ‘Advisory and Action’ Panel

Doaa

“My journey from Yemen to the UK as a child born with a spinal condition driven by the lack of developed medical care and resources available as a woman in a wheelchair, has given me unwavering commitment to disability rights and disrupting the disability narrative.”

Geoffery

“Moving to England at the age of 8 from Pakistan, there were many cultural and language barriers that made it challenging for me to adjust to life, especially in the classroom. However, sports allowed me to interact with my peers and allowed me to build friendships.”

Lipa

“My passion for football is constantly growing, which led me to coin my catchphrase: ‘I’m going to change the world with a hijab on my head and a ball at my feet.’ I want to be the change by challenging myself and engaging with minority communities; by doing so, my catchphrase becomes a reality.”

Dylan

“I’ve always loved and enjoyed sports, but the world of sport has a long way to go. I’ve found that my identity can be a huge barrier in how much I participate; sometimes this makes sports feel like an unwelcoming space.”

Serena

“As a South Asian female, being involved in sports hasn’t always been easy, but this is my catalyst for change. Regardless of the negative experiences I faced growing up, I still love sports. However, for so many, negative experiences can be a deterrent. I want to make a difference.”

Jordan

“As a young mixed-race person, I am unique within my community – a trailblazer, breaking the path for others like me to follow. Sport is a great way to upskill yourself and others around you. I began volunteering to give back to my community, and to develop myself.”

Emily

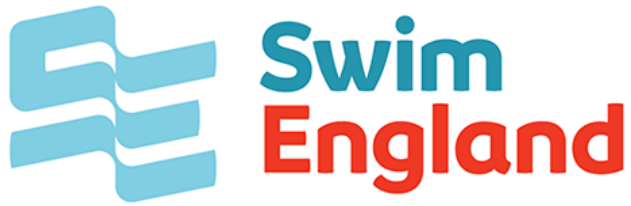
“Emily is passionate about improving access to opportunities for those from underrepresented backgrounds. Through working with organisations [...] and speaking at many schools and companies across the country, she aims to use her voice to encourage young people to fulfil their potential and educate relevant stakeholders [...].”

Jonathan

“I was appointed as the youngest ever Lawn Tennis Association Councillor in the governing bodies 135-year history [...] I am now on a mission to transform the landscape of volunteering in British tennis for young people from all backgrounds.”

To read their full bios, please refer to the Framework Guidance attached with this report.

The NGBs / Sports Organisations



Swim England is the national governing body for swimming, diving, water polo, open water swimming, and synchronised swimming in England. It forms part of British Swimming, a federation of the national governing bodies of England, Scotland, and Wales.

Before taking part in Unified Action, they had a Youth Advisory Panel in place, however there were no young people from racialised communities involved.



Paddle UK (formerly British Canoeing) is a national governing body for paddlesports in the UK. It is the umbrella organisation for the home nation associations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They are still the membership body for England and are responsible for developing the sport in England.

Paddle UK had no formalised approach in place to gather (diverse) youth voice before taking part in Unified Action.



England Golf is the governing body for amateur golf in England, and the Golf Foundation is a national charity, who work closely with partners to deliver golf to new faces across the UK.

Before taking part in Unified Action, England Golf had a National Young Ambassadors Panel in place, jointly managed with the Golf Foundation.

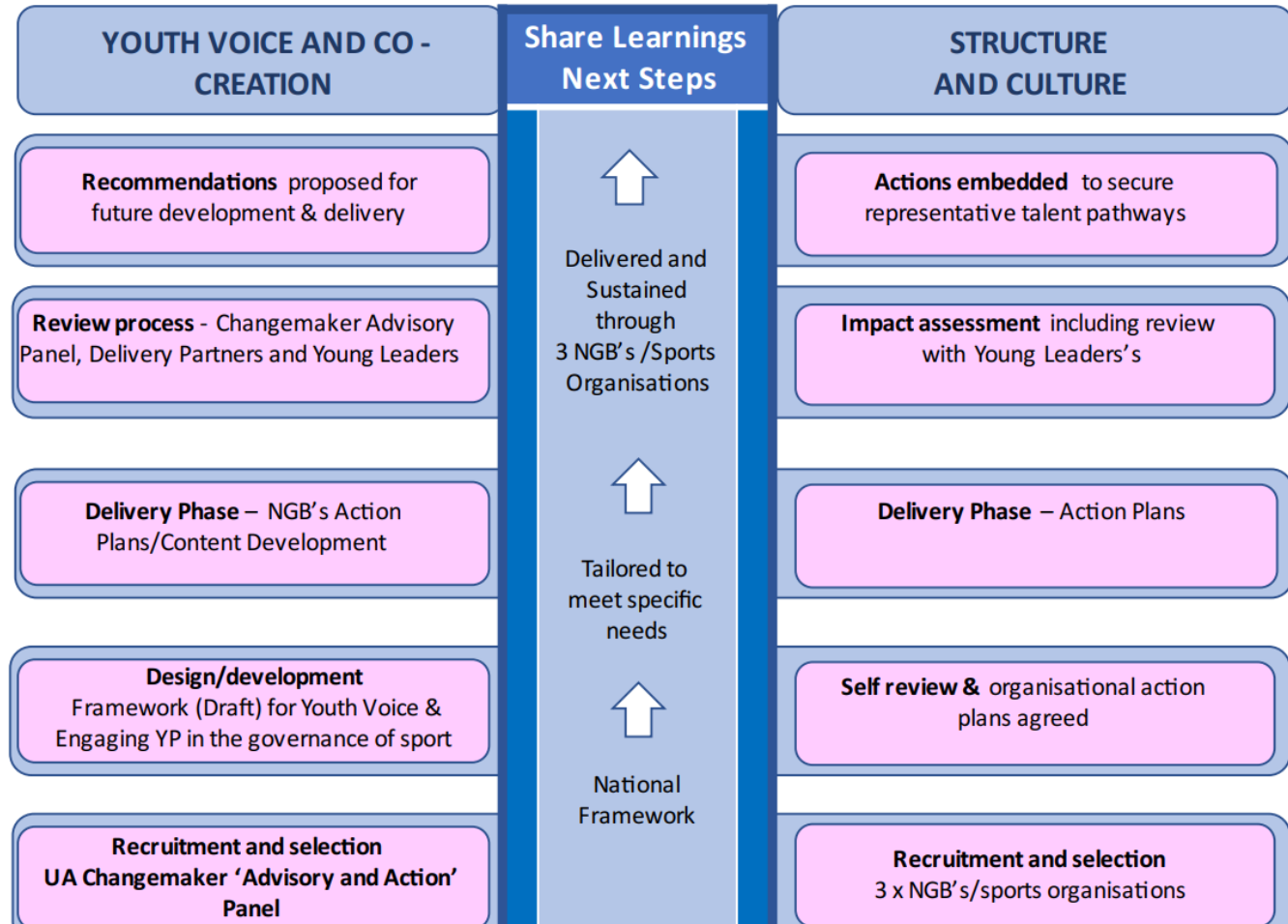
The IDEAL Pathway Framework



This pilot was structured to YST's **5-step pathway for innovation**, which adopts the 'IDEAL' Framework –
Initiate, Develop, Engage, Assess, Learn.

On the right-hand side is an overview of the pilot design.

Initiate
Develop
Engage
Assess
Learn



Pilot Activities and Engagement

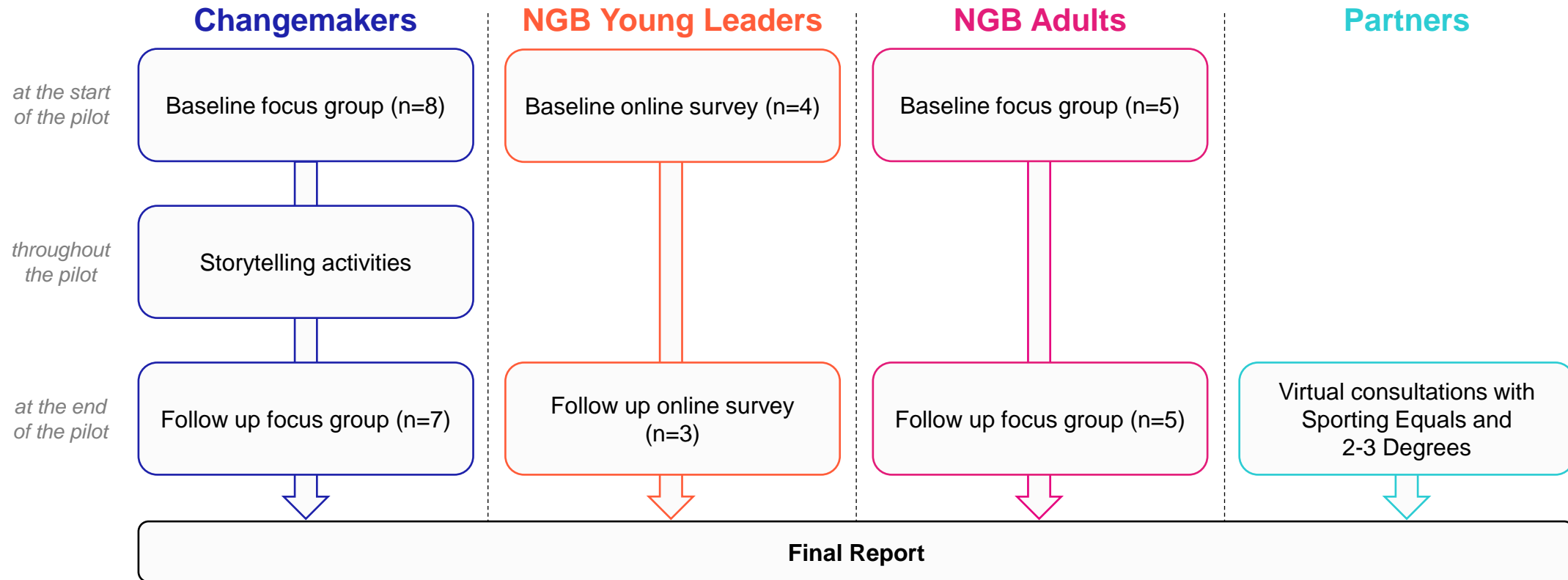
Date	Activity	Who Attended
24 April 2023	Recruited Changemaker Panel	YST, Sporting Equals
5 May 2023	NGBs shortlisted	YST, Sporting Equals
17 May 2023	NGBs briefing held	YST, Sporting Equals
5 June 2023	NGBs recruited	YST, Sporting Equals
19 June 2023	Unified Action Changemaker Virtual Induction	Changemaker Panel, YST, Sporting Equals, 2-3 Degrees
27 June 2023	NGB Virtual Connection	NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals
31 July / 1 August 2023	Unified Action Face to Face Development Session	Changemaker Panel, NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals, 2-3 Degrees
8 September 2023	NGB action plans submitted	
18 September 2023	NGB action plan feedback from Changemakers shared with NGBs	
27 September 2023	NGB support sessions	NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals
3 October 2023	NGB support sessions	NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals
16 October 2023	Unified Action Virtual Connect	Changemaker Panel, NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals, 2-3 Degrees
2 November 2023	NGB Support Sessions	NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals
27 November 2023	Unified Action Virtual Connect	Changemaker Panel, NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals, 2-3 Degrees
29 January 2024	Unified Action Virtual Connect	Changemaker Panel, NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals, 2-3 Degrees
8 February 2024	NGB Young People Virtual EDI Training	Young people, YST, Sporting Equals
15 February 2024	NGB Young People Virtual EDI Training	Young people, YST, Sporting Equals
19 / 20 February 2024	Unified Action Face to Face Reflection Session	Changemaker Panel, NGBs, YST, Sporting Equals, 2-3 Degrees

Regular connection through email / WhatsApp with all parties to gather feedback on and discuss developments and learnings.

Evaluation Overview

The aim was to test the extent to which the different elements of the design and delivery of Unified Action DSG directly contributed to the expected outputs and outcomes and assess the extent to which the outcomes have been achieved.

Unified Action DSG was evaluated by the YST's Research and Insight Team, using the following evaluation approach:



2. Outcomes Achieved



1st Key Outcome

Young People from racialised communities are empowered to lead pilot research to promote inclusive sport governance



Feelings before Unified Action

The Changemakers felt somewhat valued, respected and empowered in sport governance before the pilot, but there was a real lack of feeling represented that needed to be addressed.

Positive response ●
Mixed response ●
Negative response ●
Don't know ●

In sport governance, to what extent do you feel...

valued



"If it's something specific they need a young person for then they will value it. With LTA Youth, they implemented all suggestions because I was the expert. With anything not youth-related, I have to work twice as hard to contribute the same amount."

'valued' – appreciated and bringing something to the team

respected



"I feel like our voices are heard as many of the things we have raised within our meetings have been seen as priorities."

"Respected to an extent. I feel like I am listened to but not always heard."

'respected' – listened to and voice heard

empowered



"I feel confident in saying what I have to say, don't feel like I have to dull down. I feel empowered enough to say what's on my mind and what needs to change, whether that then gets acted on or not."

"I feel empowered to go into rooms and have my voice heard, but it doesn't echo outside of that - nothing happens. Feel like my self-worth has gone down, self-doubts creeps in."

'empowered' – ability and confidence to take positive action

represented



"Never seen a young person attend governance networking meetings."

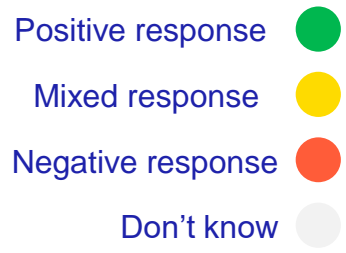
"With any meeting about trans inclusion with any sort of organisation, it's always people who aren't trans talking about trans people to me."

"52% of people who play tennis are young people, yet I'm the only person in the committee who's under the age of 40."

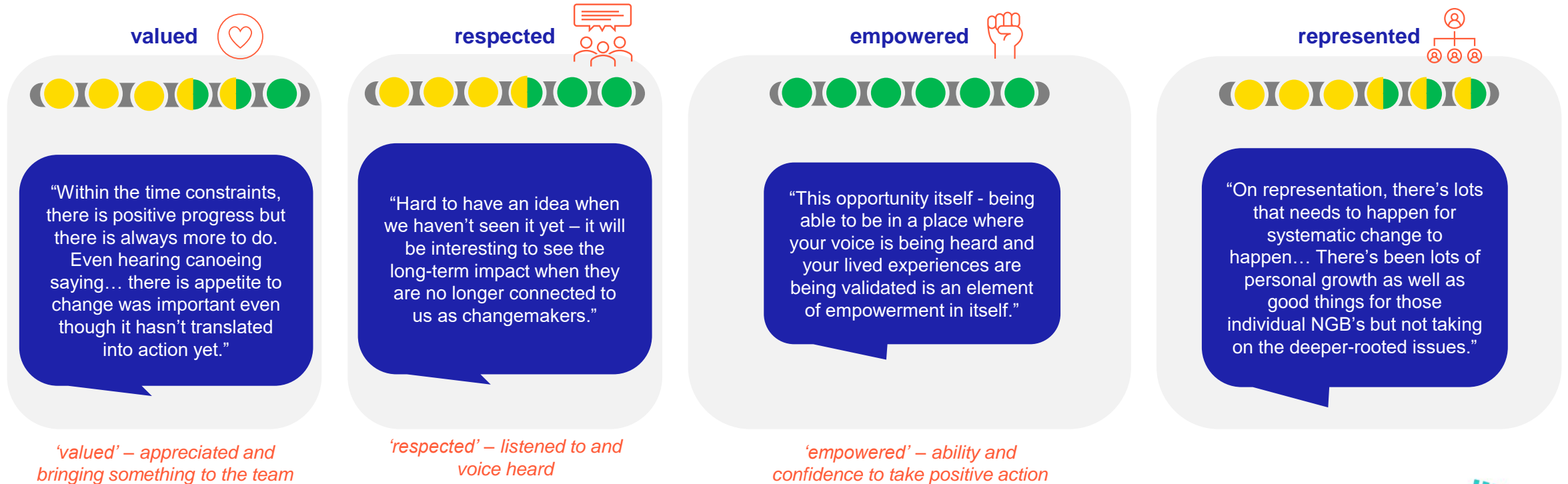
Source: Baseline focus group with Changemakers

Feelings after Unified Action

The Changemakers felt positive changes in how they feel in sport governance, in particular feeling empowered, but are still hesitant based on previous experience of projects not maintaining a legacy.



Has being involved in Unified Action changed how ... you feel in sport governance?



Source: Follow up focus group with Changemakers

The Changemaker Meetings



Both in-person and virtually, the Changemakers gained momentum in the pilot whenever they met – leaving the meetings feeling more empowered to share their voice and to co-design the Unified Action pilot.



From my personal experience, the most powerful coalition is a volunteer and a professional. If you can convince both sides of the way in which sport is governed, you will get further. Voluntary and executive sides singing off the same hymn sheet will have more of an impact.

Changemaker

1st Outcome – Progress reflections

The first outcome has been achieved throughout the Unified Action pilot: Young people from racialised communities were empowered to lead pilot research to promote inclusive sport governance.

What worked well



- ✓ **Recruitment of Changemaker Panel** – great diversity in the group, not only did they work well with the NGBs but importantly they worked well as a group and learned from each other
- ✓ **Good collaboration between Changemakers and NGBs** – the “speed-dating” activity was fun and rigorous, and the joint meetings helped to form an understanding and perspective
- ✓ **Engaging nature** of Changemaker Panel Meetings due to the facilitation by 2-3 Degrees and breakout room discussions
- ✓ The **combination of virtual and face-to-face** sessions

“The meetings were so engaging, they made me *want* to come and not feel like I *had* to. They [2-3 Degrees] gave more of a youth element, their vibes appealed to us.”

Changemaker

“How we were coupled up was great because it meant we had a choice.”

Changemaker

Even better if



- **Change of terminology** – the Changemakers have fed back that they use the term “ethnically diverse communities” instead of “racialised communities”. This was adopted by all participants as part of the pilot and across the sector and endorsed by Sporting Equals.
- **More meetings** between the Changemaker Panel and NGBs to keep engagement throughout the project, in particular more face-to-face sessions to connect
- Provide **more opportunities for the Changemakers** – skills audit of personal needs at the start of the project to provide tailored opportunities, more exposure to the working environments of NGBs outside scheduled meetings
- Establish a **link between Changemakers and NGB Board Members** rather than ‘just’ EDI leads

“We had EDI leads but they could go back and the people ‘above’ may not make any changes. Someone on the Board who makes the decisions could be useful to get involved.”

Changemaker

“What would be really nice is if we did a skills audit for each of us and then had an extra-curricular opportunity personalised to the skills we want to develop.”

Changemaker

Source: Follow up focus group with Changemakers, follow up focus group with NGBs, consultation with partners

2nd Key Outcome

National Governing Bodies of Sport have greater understanding of the environments / structures that support inclusive sport governance

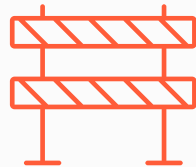


Challenges in NGBs before Unified Action

There are a variety of shared challenges that NGBs experience to diversify leadership/governance positions in sport. The main one revolves around lack of diversity at grassroots level.

Challenges within NGBs to diversify leadership/governance positions

- Lack of diversity at grassroots level
- Recruitment
- Lack of role models
- (Perceived) affordability
- Lack of understanding / awareness
- Low levels of trust
- Lack of physical opportunities



"The vast majority of governance roles are accessed via the sport, therefore our committees/Boards etc. reflect a lack of diversity at the grass roots level. Showing people that aquatics is for them is vital, as is **increasing understanding** that you don't need to be a great swimmer to be involved."

"A lot of it comes down to affordability - swimming lessons are £25. A lot of sports have that. Also, perceived affordability."



"There are challenges with **low levels of trust** when looking to engage with ethnically diverse communities, and feelings that our **intentions are not meaningful** or will lead to systemic change in our governance."

PADDLE^{UK}

"Our membership in the paddling community reflects older age groups, and are overwhelmingly from white backgrounds, which means we know we are not engaging with diverse communities in the grassroots space, which has an impact as we move further up the chain."

"**Physical opportunities** aren't there. Practicalities haven't changed - where you're advertising etc. I'm not seeing those opportunities as a South Asian woman because I'm not in an aquatics club. Not accessible."

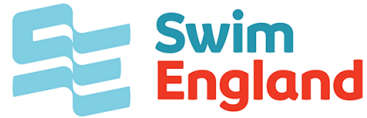
"**Recruitment** - perception that you need to be a golfer to work in the golf industry. **Lack of role models** at the leadership/governance level."



Source: HubSpot Survey. Question that was asked: What are the current challenges your organisation faces to diversify leadership / governance positions? (can relate to roles at a national, regional or local decision-making level)

Challenges in NGBs before Unified Action

While the NGBs have previous experience of engaging with racialised communities, they highlight areas for improvement to feel more competent and confident, in particular with young people in decision-making.



- Within Swim England, some had previous experiences in engaging with racialised communities, with a level of knowledge and feelings of competency.
- Others highlighted self-awareness of not being relatable to other communities and lacking in confidence as a result.

"Had a previous role getting South Asian women involved in cricket, some knowledge there. My role now is looking at disability, so there's some elements where I have some knowledge. But there's always something to learn."



- The Paddle UK (formerly British Canoeing) representative had general experience in working with racialised communities and had lived experience.
- They felt less competent around engaging with communities they are not personally connected to, and within a paddlesports context specifically.

"I have lived experience where I can connect (from South Asian background) - have worked across different sports within that space. [...] I feel confident in terms of a wider context but less in canoeing. If it's in a setting with no connection previously (e.g. disability) - feel less competent around that."



- The Golf Foundation representative used to feel less competent in the past, but their confidence has increased since engaging more with racialised communities.
- They still highlighted that there is room to improve moving forward.

"I used to be more towards the negative, but I've done lots of work since then and learnt an awful lot. I feel a bit more positive now. Still a lot to learn but I can tell how my confidence has changed in certain environments and how passionate I feel about it."

Source: Baseline focus group with NGBs. Question that was asked: How do you feel about effectively engaging ethnically diverse young people in decision making?

Experience of Young Leaders in NGBs

experience overall

Being a Young Leader is a valued opportunity

Some Young Leaders have years of experience as part of a youth panel, others are at the beginning of their journey. This is seen as a valuable opportunity to create improvements in the sports they play.

“a chance to advocate for the interests of young people and make a real impact”

influencing change

Influencing change is possible, but limited

Young Leaders feel positive about the change they can influence, in the form of voicing opinions, shaping projects, and engaging young people. However, they also feel that there are limitations to their impact.

“able to voice our opinions [...] however we do often need research and people higher up to support our opinions to ensure that something is able to change”

opportunities

Opportunities for racialised communities are underused

Young Leaders believe that there are opportunities in their NGBs/sports organisations for young people from racialised communities to engage with, but there is a lack of uptake.

“there is a lack of willingness to go ahead and take that opportunity”

Source: Baseline survey for NGB Young Leaders. Questions that were asked: Can you tell me about your experience of being on a youth panel for an NGB? In what ways can you influence change as a Young Leader within your NGB? What opportunities are there in your NGB for ethnically diverse people to have their voices heard and be represented?



Young Leaders' feelings about the pilot

There is a sense of excitement about taking part in Unified Action and feeling motivated to make an impact.

How do you **feel** about taking part in this pilot as Young Leaders?



“excited”

“intrigued”

“important for those that come after us”

“hope it will be productive”

“I think this is something that is extremely **important for those that come after us** to make sure that everyone has opportunities to be valued and represented within their sport and that starts with sport governance.”

“I’m **excited** about taking part in this Unified Action pilot as Young Leaders! It’s an incredible opportunity to make a positive impact on sport governance and work towards improving representation. I believe that by **coming together** as Young Leaders, we can bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and drive positive change.”

“**Intrigued** to see how this pathway pans out and looking forward to use those successes and apply them nationally across a range of sports.”

“I am looking forward to taking part in the pilot and **hope it will be productive.**”

What are you **hoping to achieve** from participating?



“support”

“provide information”

“ignite the fire”

“make a positive impact”

“Help provide information to improve diversity within NGBs in all sports.”

“I hope to make a positive impact by improving the representation of young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds.”

“To support different diverse people be able to get opportunities to be heard and to have a say to make sport a better place for every single person.”

“To be able to ignite the fire and start the driving force that aims to tackle representation in sport.”

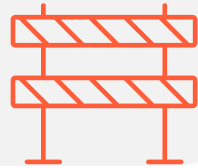
Source: Baseline survey for NGB Young Leaders

Young Leaders' perceived challenges in NGBs

For the Young Leaders who currently work in NGBs, the key theme which emerged was that there is currently no safe space for young people from racialised communities to have their voices heard – due to lack of representation.

Young Leaders think...

The key barrier within NGBs for young people from racialised communities to have their voices heard is that there is currently **no safe space** to do so. This may be due to its lack of representation and role models.



"The barriers could stem down to these people feeling our sporting environments are **not a comfortable place for them to speak up** and if they **do not see many role models** above them that are similar to themselves, they may believe they do not have a right to have their voices heard."




"A lack of ethnically diverse people available mean that a wide range of **opinions are not voiced** and the voice of those there are not heard as often."

"Those from diverse backgrounds **lack representation** in NGBs that brings them to feel comfortable about voicing their opinions."

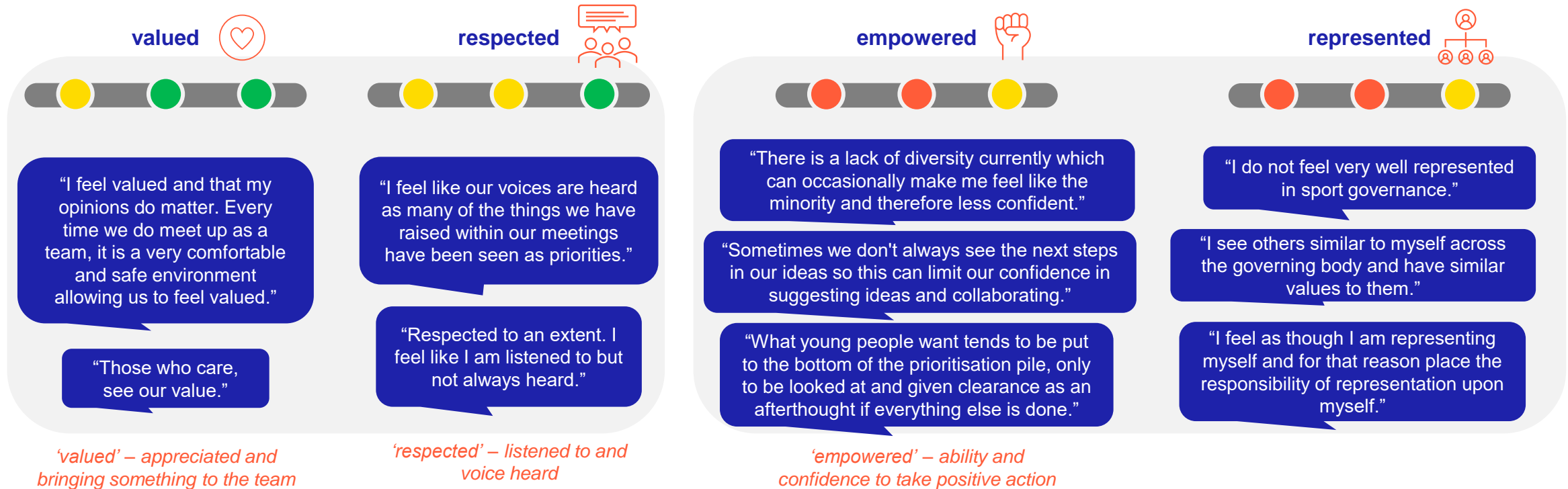
Source: Baseline survey for NGB Young Leaders. Question that was asked: What barriers are there in your NGB for ethnically diverse people to have their voices heard and be represented?

Young Leaders' feelings before the pilot

While Young Leaders felt valued and respected in sport governance to an extent before Unified Action, they lacked in feeling empowered and represented.

Positive response 
Mixed response 
Negative response 

In sport governance, to what extent do you feel...



Source: Baseline survey for NGB Young Leaders

Young Leaders' feelings after the pilot

Young Leaders reported an encouraging increase in feeling empowered and represented in sport governance as a result of being involved in Unified Action.

Positive response ●
Mixed response ●
Negative response ●

Has being involved in Unified Action changed how ... you feel in sport governance?



Source: Follow up survey for NGB Young Leaders

Changemakers recognise real change in NGBs

The Changemakers felt that the NGBs showed a genuine passion and interest for creating a more inclusive sport governance – and they recognised the impressive journeys they have been on as part of the pilot.



Genuine care and interest

- Changemakers felt that their thoughts and feelings were **listened to** which increased their feelings of being valued and respected
- Changemakers felt that their **suggestions and feedback were actioned by the NGBs** – they showed real tangible outcomes – which is something the Changemakers are not always used to
- Changemakers **have seen a change in NGBs throughout the project journey** and recognise that their intentions are genuine
- Changemakers showed an optimistic and **hopeful outlook that the NGBs will continue this work** after the pilot

“Having my voice heard by NGBs has been truly valuable for me; to feel that my story, my journey, and my lived experience is valid and wanted to be heard.”

“The NGBs have taken what's been said and actioned it - often I'm not seeing what I'm sharing as being actioned. The NGBs have taken on people from diverse backgrounds and included them on their panels to be able to hear a diverse perspective. I hope that NGBs will continue to listen and allow young people to share their experiences.”

“Nice to see how the NGBs have [...] been on a developmental journey throughout the process.”

“The biggest change I've seen is that NGBs are keen to improve in this space [...] Their intentions are really positive, and they have all the right ideas.”

Changemakers

Source: Follow up focus group with Changemakers

2nd Outcome – Progress reflections

The second outcome has been achieved throughout the Unified Action pilot: **Sporting NGBs have greater understanding of the environments / structures that support inclusive sport governance.**

What worked well



- ✓ **Opportunity for NGBs to work with a group of young people from racialised communities** – to hear honest feedback from those with lived experience
- ✓ **Good facilitation of discussions** through YST, 2-3 Degrees and Sporting Equals – bringing young people and NGBs together in a productive and inspiring way
- ✓ **Action plans** came together nicely – next steps identified and put in place to achieve tangible outcomes for the future after the pilot finishes
- ✓ **Opportunity for NGBs to collaborate with other NGBs** and gain an 'outside perspective' into their sport

"Having the opportunity to engage and hear their [Changemakers] honest opinions was very useful."

NGB

"Working and having feedback outside of golf has been really useful – we wouldn't necessarily have collaborated with these NGBs before."

NGB

Source: Follow up focus group with NGBs

Even better if



- **Extend the length** of the pilot – the pilot lasted 12 months but the first 3 months involved recruitment. Therefore, there were only 9 months of delivery (June 2023 – February 2024). If the pilot duration was extended to 15 months, it would allow for 12 months of delivery.
- Provide **more in-person opportunities for the NGBs to meet with the Changemakers** – it took longer than anticipated to build trust and create a safe space between the Changemakers and NGBs. This process may have been supported by including more in-person opportunities to meet. Both parties expressed the desire to have more time together in person as it encourages more honest conversations.
- **Immersing Changemakers more in the environments of NGBs** and taking up opportunities offered – including connecting with Young Leaders of NGBs

"The calibre of young people involved was amazing [...] We are crying for volunteers like this. If this was a longer-term project, it would give us more opportunity to start to work with them."

NGB

"More opportunities to work with the Changemakers. Face-to-face has been much more productive."

NGB

3rd Key Outcome

Young People from racialised communities have the skills, confidence and knowledge to advocate for inclusive sport governance



Changemakers' increase in skills

Unified Action supported the Changemakers to learn and improve valuable life skills, including communication, leadership and advocacy skills.

Increase in skills



- ✓ Changemakers have reported that they **valued the session around effective communication the most** – this included public speaking, and being able to develop different ways of communicating to different people



- ✓ Changemakers have emphasised that they have **learned and built up their skills from each other through a collective team effort and networking** – being able to talk to the other Changemakers and the NGBs has allowed them to consider new perspectives



- ✓ Changemakers have **increased their leadership skills** by challenging perceptions and bringing about tangible outcomes within NGBs

"I found the session on refining public speaking skills insightful. Learning to enhance the delivery of my message and align it with its purpose was valuable. The focus on strategic communication and receiving feedback from others provided a well-rounded perspective, contributing to my overall understanding and improvement in this skill."

"Us as Changemakers have learnt a lot from each other and from the NGBs related to our personal and professional development."

"One of the things I've enjoyed the most was [...] being able to challenge some of the perceptions that the NGBs had and making a real difference to the way that they were approaching governance."

Source: Follow up focus group with Changemakers

Changemakers' increase in confidence

As a result of taking part in Unified Action, the Changemakers have built up their confidence, especially through their communication, which led them to take up opportunities and feeling optimistic about their future.



Increase in confidence

- ✓ Changemakers **who have always struggled with confidence** have reported that Unified Action has pushed them out of their comfort zone, leading to a significant increase in confidence
- ✓ Confidence was built up in particular by working on their **communication skills**, including public speaking
- ✓ Changemakers see the **value of increased confidence for their future after the pilot has finished**, for both their personal and professional lives
- ✓ Changemakers **took up opportunities** such as speaking at conferences, which they felt was only possible due to the increase in confidence experienced through Unified Action

"I'm really proud that I wasn't the most confident person at the start of this project, but through it I've learnt different communication skills and public speaking techniques to make me feel a lot more confident speaking to people which is something that I can definitely take forward into my professional life as well. In the past I've been slightly shy or nervous about speaking out in front of people, but I'm excited to do more of it after this project."

"Confidence has been a big issue for me and being around people with similar interests has been really useful and will help me take it forward into my career as well. Talking at a Sport England conference about this project and the barriers – it [Unified Action] has definitely given me the confidence to do that."

Source: Follow up focus group with Changemakers

Changemakers' increase in knowledge

Networking with fellow Changemakers and NGBs, and learning from each other, has helped the Changemakers to increase their knowledge around sport governance.



Increase in knowledge

- ✓ Changemakers, especially the ones who were not familiar with sport governance previously, reported **significant increase in knowledge** around sport governance
- ✓ Knowledge was **built up through networking with NGBs** and immersing themselves in their sport environment
- ✓ Changemakers **took up opportunities to apply this knowledge** at events where they then shared the knowledge further with others

"I've always been quite a confident person – what it [Unified Action] has given me has been the education aspect of being an advocate and promoting youth voice. It made me more knowledgeable on how that all works. I spoke at a Sporting Equals event where I was the youngest person there."

"A great opportunity to understand how NGBs run governance in their organisation. Also, there are opportunities outside of YST, like the Sporting Equals Awards [...]."

"For me personally I didn't know much about sport governance, so it's been really good to learn more about it."

Source: Follow up focus group with Changemakers

Young Leaders' increase in knowledge

Taking part in the Unified Action pilot allowed some Young Leaders to improve their knowledge of sport governance positions and leadership pathways – by also understanding their current role better.

- At the start of the Unified Action pilot, Young Leaders within NGBs/sports organisations reported **limited to no knowledge of leadership pathways** into governance positions in sport. When there was knowledge, pathways were not perceived to be accessible.
- At the end of the Unified Action pilot, some Young Leaders did not report an increase in knowledge around governance positions generally. However, they felt that they gained a more in-depth understanding of their current role within the NGB. One Young Leader did report an **increase in knowledge of different governance positions in sport**, and that pathways were perceived to be accessible.



"I feel as though I have learned about the different responsibilities different positions have and how these are interlinked."

"I do think that these [leadership pathways] are accessible however if I had not taken part in this, I would not have done enough research and thought into this and would not know."

"I don't feel I've learnt anything significant about governance positions in sport over the course of this project and have more seen further sides as part of my role chairing a panel and sitting on a committee within the NGB."

"It helped me to think more about the different ways we can be involved and the pathways within our organisation that I had not really thought about before."

Source: Baseline survey for NGB Young Leaders. Question that was asked: How much do you know about leadership pathways into governance positions in sport? If you are aware of any pathways, how accessible do you perceive these to be? Follow up survey for NGB Young Leaders. Questions that were asked: Do you feel you know more about governance positions in sport? Do you feel you know more about leadership pathways into governance positions in sport?



Young Leaders' ability to influence change

Unified Action helped Young Leaders to gain knowledge and confidence to continue influencing change within their NGBs / sports organisations.

As a result of taking part in the Unified Action pilot, Young Leaders perceive themselves to have **more ability to influence change within their NGB / sports organisation.**

This is due to an increase in confidence to speak up and feeling more equipped with knowledge and information.

While they highlight areas of improvement moving forward, it is positive to note their level of optimism in what they are capable of in the future.



"Yes - I feel more informed, and I have the confidence to speak up about bringing more people into the room, even when I'm not part of those communities. I still have a lot to learn, and as an NGB there's still a lot of room for making sure more people have seats at the table, but I'm hopeful I can help contribute."

"Yes, I feel I have more information about how I can influence change and I also understand my role and what types of impacts I can have."

"I feel more equipped in terms of knowledge but less so on the ability to directly lead change."

Source: Follow up survey for NGB Young Leaders. Question that was asked: As a result of taking part in the Unified Action pilot, do you feel you have more ability to influence change as a Young Leader within your NGB/sports organisation?



3rd Outcome – Progress reflections

The third outcome has been achieved throughout the Unified Action pilot: Young People from racialised communities have the skills, confidence and knowledge to advocate for inclusive sport governance.

What worked well



- ✓ **Being able to network on the Changemaker panel** – being able to learn from each other brought the best out of the Changemakers as a panel group
- ✓ **Being able to network with NGBs** – they emphasised that directly communicating with key stakeholders in sport was helpful for their professional and personal development
- ✓ **Providing Changemakers with opportunities outside of Unified Action**, e.g. attending the Sporting Equals Diversity in Sport Awards, National Belong Conference, England Golf and Golf Foundation National Golf Event at Wentworth, YST National Youth Summit
- ✓ **Providing Young Leaders with more opportunities**, e.g. YST commissioned Sporting Equals to deliver 2 virtual training sessions for all NGB Young Leaders on EDI. Swim England have delivered additional training for their Young Leaders in partnership with Sporting Equals.

"I have no personal experience in being ethnically diverse, and it's given me more ideas of how to reach people where they are, instead of just hoping they'll end up where I am."

Young Leader

Even better if



- Provide **more opportunities for the Changemakers** – skills audit of personal needs at the start of the project to provide opportunities tailored to the Changemakers' specific developmental needs, more exposure to the environment of NGBs
- Establish a **link between Changemakers and NGB Board Members** rather than 'just' EDI leads

"In my line of work, the EDI leads often have a small team around them - don't feel they have the support of people above to make changes. We had EDI leads but they could go back and the people above them may not want to take that on board. Someone on the Board who makes the decisions could be useful to get involved."

Changemaker

Source: Follow up focus group with Changemakers, follow up focus group with NGBs, consultation with partners

3. Pilot Legacy



Pilot Legacy

Changemakers and NGBs have highlighted a variety of different ways to keep the momentum of the Unified Action pilot going when it finishes its delivery. Key themes are summarised below.

Pilot Legacy

- ✓ **NGBs realised the importance of youth voice**, in particular from young people from racialised communities and underrepresented groups, to understand and remove barriers to grow their sport.
- ✓ NGBs to **work on the action plans developed** and **continue to build upon their learnings** moving forward. Tangible actions include for Swim England and Golf England/the Golf Foundation to recruit an EDI lead to their Youth Advisory Panel.
- ✓ **The Changemaker Panel to remain a strongly connected network** of like-minded people to strive for positive action and work together
- ✓ Changemakers and NGBs to **maintain relationships** and continue the collaboration after the pilot has finished
- ✓ **Actions plans to be disseminated to other NGBs** to be used as a useful tool for anyone to make positive change across a wider sporting field, including sharing their stories and findings to Sport England, Sport and Recreation Alliance Members, and through YST, Sporting Equals and NGB conferences and platforms to have their voice heard.
- ✓ More funding to allow for another delivery of the Unified Action pilot with a **new cohort of Changemakers working with other NGBs** – to continue revolutionising the space and engage young people from racialised communities
- ✓ Continue **targeting specifically those sports that are underrepresented** and NGBs which currently do not offer EDI frameworks or opportunities

“The like-minded young people I've been surrounded by - people from different backgrounds, ages, abilities, and different lived experiences - I feel as though that network will carry on and be a hub to formulate change together. We want to make change happen if not today, then tomorrow.”

Changemaker

“I hope the framework that we've come up with can be taken by any sport and put into action. I hope that what we've produced is a useful tool for anyone to make positive change within their governance structures with regards to young people and especially those from ethnically diverse backgrounds, making sure that their voices are heard, and they can make an impact within their sport.”

Sample: Follow up focus group with NGBs and Changemakers

Spotlight on Swim England

Starting within their Youth Advisory Panel, with the ambition to have a national impact



As a result of Unified Action, Swim England...

- ✓ **Created a new position** – Swim England will recruit an EDI lead to their Youth Advisory Panel
- ✓ **Modified the recruitment process for the new position** – before Unified Action, you would have to be a member to apply for a position. This barrier has now been removed to allow for more people to apply.
- ✓ **Ambitions to replicate the new recruitment process nationally** – Swim England intends on using the recruitment of the EDI lead for the Youth Advisory Panel as a learning for further recruitments in other regions to achieve national impact.
- ✓ **Ambitions to maintain and strengthen the relationships with the Changemakers and continue collaboration** beyond the Unified Action pilot

“The biggest difference I have seen because of this project was the open-mindedness that the NGBs have formed throughout the project. One example would be Swim England – how they listened to the fact that whilst their current programme may be representative of the population that they serve, it’s not necessarily going to attract or even break down barriers to attract young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds, because of the barrier of needing to be a Swim England member in order to be a part of their Board. One of the things they’ve done is remove that requirement moving forwards which has been a real positive.”

Changemaker

“I hope that we maintain the relationships with the Changemakers we’ve met as part of the project. [...] I was already speaking to Geoffrey earlier about how he could potentially be one of the EDI leads for one of our regions.”

“The impact the Changemakers had on Swim England in moving their EDI policies forward has been great. It was a great process they went through, and this project helped them realise they can remove small barriers and achieve a big impact.”

Sporting Equals



Sample: Follow up focus group with NGBs and Changemakers, virtual consultations with partners

Spotlight on the Golf Foundation & England Golf

Providing a variety of ways to take the learnings of the Unified Action pilot forward



As a result of Unified Action, the Golf Foundation & England Golf...

- ✓ **Introduce Young Ambassadors to a panel of Board members** from both organisations and **linking their Young EDI lead to the Main Board EDI lead** – and continue to do regular visits
- ✓ **Trustee to give inspirational talk to Young Ambassadors about career journey** and offering **mentoring opportunities**
- ✓ **Recruited an EDI lead to the Young Ambassador Programme** which is a past member of the programme - currently working on further evolving this role
- ✓ **Recruit a Young Ambassador** to sit on the Main Board by December 2024
- ✓ **Develop a Golf Futures Programme** providing more training around sport governance and chairing meetings

"The Unified Action project has really helped to understand how we can move our Young Ambassadors Programme forward."



"We have provided our Young Ambassadors with more opportunities, pushed them to go to conferences and to present. The project has helped us push this forward and put more steps in place in terms of how the young people are feeding into the Board and giving them more exposure. There's definitely been growth in our Young Ambassadors as a result, more awareness and knowledge, as well as confidence and their ability to talk around different subjects. Some have gone on to careers in Golf as a result."

Sample: Follow up focus group with NGBs and Changemakers, virtual consultations with partners

Spotlight on Paddle UK (Formerly British Canoeing)

Showing an example to other smaller NGBs on how to embark on a youth leadership journey



As a result of Unified Action, Paddle UK...

- ✓ **Increased understanding of how to improve structures** – Paddle UK reported that it was through the close work with the Changemakers that they were able to gain a better understanding of how they can increase their accessibility in structures to include people from racialised communities
- ✓ **Branch out and seek external expertise** – Paddle UK started to look at partnerships with external organisations, recruitment boards and sector partners to see the wider network available to them to engage with young people
- ✓ **Aim to set up a Youth Forum and establish pathways in 2024** – the pilot offered Paddle UK a starting point to their youth leadership journey, with the aim to finalise their Terms of Reference for a Youth Forum this year to represent young people from racialised communities

“Having an enthusiastic group of Changemakers has been a real step change in understanding how we can change operate to ensure that it’s more accessible. [...] Having the Changemakers to bounce ideas off of and look at ways we are structured and how that may be changed, has been invaluable. It made us question why the structures are the way they are, leading to meaningful changes in the future.”



PADDLE^{UK}

Sporting Equals

“Paddle UK did not have any youth board or panel before Unified Action, but now they are looking to set one up taking the learnings from this project forward.”

“It’s been nice to sort of understand where they are at in their journey in trying to involve young people within their government structure. They came in with involvement with involving young people, so for them, it was more a case of understanding how they go about implementing a youth board as part of their structure.”

Changemaker

Sample: Follow up focus group with NGBs and Changemakers, virtual consultations with partners

4. Conclusions



Conclusions

one

The Unified Action pilot successfully hit the outcomes it set out to achieve

While there were no strict KPIs attached to the pilot, it is encouraging to see that the three main outcomes of Unified Action were achieved at the end of the pilot. The positive outcomes for the Changemakers, NGBs and Young Leaders demonstrate the strength of the pilot.

two

The Unified Action pilot led to tangible, long-term outcomes for the NGBs

Swim England's recruitment process has changed, and the Golf Foundation has created a new EDI role for one of their alumni youth ambassadors.

three

The collaboration between delivery partners contributed to the success of the pilot

Changemakers and NGBs emphasised that the joint facilitation by Sporting Equals, 2-3 Degrees and YST made the discussions productive and engaging. The unique expertise of each partner brought out the best in everyone involved.



Conclusions

four

There is real appetite for the Unified Action pilot to be extended or repeated

Changemakers and NGBs would have preferred more time outside of the scheduled meetings to talk and keep engaged in the pilot. They also highlighted that they would have preferred a longer period of time together to maximise long-term impact.

five

Changemakers are offered future opportunities to stay connected with NGBs

Changemakers have been approached to work with the NGBs and apply as Board members, e.g. Swim England approached Geoffery. England Golf have also asked for Changemakers to help deliver some virtual sessions for their Young Ambassadors.

six

Young people are interested to see long-term impact of the pilot – and hopeful

Based on previous experiences, the Changemakers are keen to see whether the NGBs will continue this work after they are no longer directly connected to the Changemakers. Importantly, due to the success of the pilot, they remain hopeful and optimistic.



Conclusions

The Unified Action – Diversifying Sport Governance pilot empowered a group of young people from racialised communities responding to the injustice of underrepresentation in sport governance. The collaboration with Sporting Equals and 2-3 Degrees was a success which was recognised as adding value to the pilot by everyone involved.

The pilot has successfully addressed the following three main outcomes:

1. Young People from racialised communities are empowered to lead pilot research to promote inclusive sport governance
2. Sporting National Governing Bodies have greater understanding of the environments / structures that support inclusive sport governance
3. Young People from racialised communities have the skills, confidence and knowledge to advocate for inclusive sport governance

The Unified Action pilot not only accomplished but surpassed its expected aims and outcomes. It has contributed to a substantial and meaningful impact on a targeted group of young people from racialised communities, and on the NGBs they have worked with.

Lessons learned from this pilot will be taken forward to strengthen potential future delivery of Unified Action, as this report outlines the need and desire for this.



5. Outputs Produced



A Framework for Diversifying Sport Governance

No Voice Left Behind

UNIFIED ACTION

A FRAMEWORK FOR DIVERSIFYING SPORT GOVERNANCE



No Voice Left Behind

As part of the Unified Action pilot, the Changemaker Panel used their lived experiences to co design best practice guidance for NGBs (recognising the many different contexts of NGBs) to build on and continue the work beyond the pilot phase.

The result of this collaboration is the 'Framework for Diversifying Sport Governance, 'No Voice Left Behind', a set of recommendations created to build inclusive cultures within NGBs and deepen their understanding about the barriers young people face in sport governance.

To access this document please see the PDF titled Unified Action, A Framework for Diversifying Governance, attached to this report.

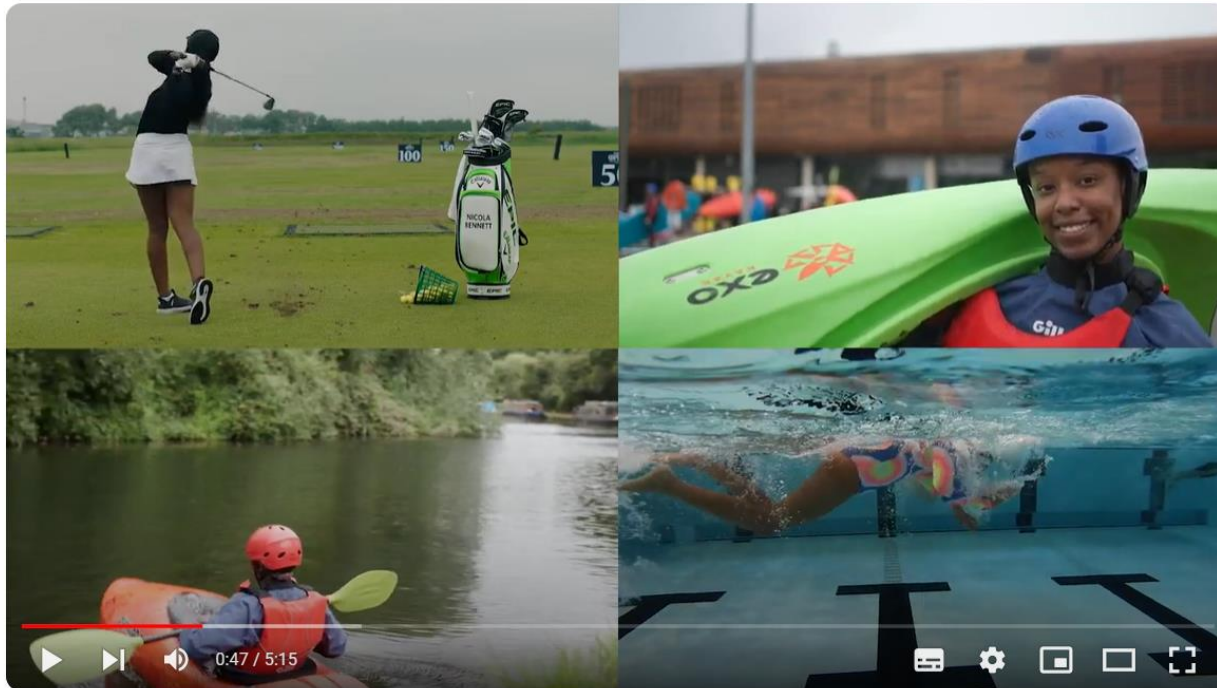


Changemaker Panel Journey

A VT capturing the Young Changemaker stories, impact and legacy of Unified Action, Diversifying Sport Governance



Search



<https://youtu.be/a59gSUuHNx4>



England Golf & Golf Foundation

A VT capturing the learnings and legacy of Golf through Unified Action, Diversifying Sport Governance



Search



<https://youtu.be/hqcLI9Hg34Q>



Swim England

A VT capturing the learnings and legacy of Swim England through Unified Action, Diversifying Sport Governance



Search



<https://youtu.be/N7izki37wrY>



Paddle UK (Formerly British Canoeing)

A VT capturing the learnings and legacy of Paddle UK through Unified Action, Diversifying Sport Governance



Search



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-zz9XORI2s>



