



YOUTH
SPORT
TRUST



YST RESEARCH

Insight driving innovation and impact

Evaluation of Alternative Competition Formats

March 2019



Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport

change
4life

SPORT
ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction.....	5
Background context.....	5
Pilot Activities	5
Delivery	6
Reach.....	6
Research approach	6
Research activities.....	7
Event observations.....	7
Alternative Competition Formats	7
Overview matrix table	7
Competitions by type of variation	9
Alternative scoring	9
Power play.....	10
Sportsmanship / value awards	11
Selection criteria	11
Skills focus	12
Player rotation.....	12
Walking variations.....	13
Alternative team formats	13
Sin bin.....	13
Bio-banding	13
Personal challenge	13
Delivery Elements	14
Communication	14
Young leaders.....	14
Outcomes for young people	14
Views of Alternative Competition Formats	15
Stakeholder insight.....	15
Strengths and benefits	16
Areas for improvement	16
Sustainability	17
Recommendations.....	17
Conclusions.....	18
Appendix 2: Desktop research	1

Executive Summary

In 2018/19, the Youth Sport Trust, funded by the Sport England National Lottery, launched a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility of conducting alternative competition formats through the School Games Organiser network with the overarching aim of increasing young people's participation in sport and physical activity. The pilot events each utilised different variations to their competition format, the most popular variation used was alternative scoring approaches. Other variations included power play, sportsmanship / values awards, selection criteria, skills focus, player rotation, alternative team format, sin bin, bio-banding and personal challenges.



Through the research activities conducted several benefits have been identified for young people participating in alternative competition formats.

- ✓ Increased participation in sport and physical activity
- ✓ Increased engagement and enjoyment
- ✓ Inclusive atmosphere with increased participation for all
- ✓ Increased sportsmanship and teamwork
- ✓ Increased skill development and quality of game play
- ✓ Increased opportunity to think strategically and tactically
- ✓ Increased sense of achievement
- ✓ Increased confidence to participate in sport and physical activity
- ✓ Promotes participation across those young people who might not have actively participated previously
- ✓ Provides the opportunity for young people to undertake leadership roles

Recommendations

The recommendations that emerged from this pilot study can be separated into general and specific, general recommendations can be applied across all types of alternative approaches whereas specific recommendations relate to specific types of alternative competition formats.

General recommendations

- ✓ **Focus on one or two alternative variations for initial events.**
- ✓ **Ensure that young leaders have an adequate understanding of the alternative approach and feel confident to lead the activity.**
- ✓ **Allow sufficient time and resources to consider how best to support a change in mindset.**
- ✓ **Communicate clearly with all participants and stakeholders.**

Specific recommendations

- ✓ **Adapted scoring** is a simple adaptation that was found to be effective at engaging and motivating participants
- ✓ **Music** worked to engage young people and create a fun atmosphere
- ✓ For formats that involve aspects of **player rotation** or player time, ensure that this is monitored to allow everyone the opportunity to participate.
- ✓ Use a standardised checklist to support staff and young people to identify those for **awards**.
- ✓ For **walking variations**, ensure that the environment and audience are suitable for this format.

Introduction

This report provides details of the evaluation of the alternative competition pilot. It includes an overview of the pilot events that were held and the key findings and recommendations. The pilot project took place from November 2018 – March 2019. The evaluation was conducted by YST Research.

Background context

Removing Barriers to Sport is one of the six [strategic objectives](#) for the Youth Sport Trust. The Youth Sport Trust aims to support schools, clubs and families to remove the causes of negative experiences in sport for young people and to ensure youth sport in the UK is inclusive, accessible and fun. Insight gained from the [Girls Active](#) programme identified that the over emphasis on competition in sport is a challenge for some young people. This led to the Youth Sport Trust Research and Insight team conducting desk research to explore possible alternative competition formats.

Utilising the desktop research findings, and in light of The School Games review in 2016 recommendation (below), the Youth Sport Trust, funded by the Sport England National Lottery, launched a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility of conducting alternative competition formats through the School Games Organiser (SGO) network with the overarching aim of increasing young people's participation in sport and physical activity.

*'Formats, guidance and training support across all levels of the School Games will be refreshed to ensure they fully support the ambitions of 'Towards an active nation' and in particular: engender a sense of competence, **promote enjoyment regardless of youngsters' level of ability and avoid negative/bad experience of competitive school sport.**'¹*

Pilot Activities

Ten School Games Organisers / Local Organising Committees were tasked with organising two pilot events using alternative competition, one for primary aged pupils and one for secondary aged pupils. The desk review generated eight principles of alternative competition formats; based on these, the areas were given the freedom to choose what and how they wanted to trial as part of the pilot.

Overall, 19 pilot alternative competition events were held. There was a wide variety in terms of the events organised and the number of young people involved. Table 1 in the appendix gives an overview of the different events each area organised.

¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/11409/school-games-review-november-2016-update.pdf>

Delivery

This pilot project took place in ten School Games Organiser areas (SGOs) across England and one local organising committee (LOC). Areas were invited to apply to be involved with the project and were selected on the basis of the strength of their application. There was a good geographical spread of area. The areas involved were

- Angmering SGO
- Blackpool SGO
- Bosworth SGO
- Broxtowe SGO
- Cavendish SGO
- Chorley SGO
- Cornwall LOC
- East Riding SGO
- Heysham SGO
- Mid Cornwall SGO
- Tonbridge SGO



Reach

The overall reach of the project has been calculated using the case studies submitted by each SGO / LOC who were asked to record the number of young people involved and key demographics including gender, special educational needs (SEND) and ethnicity (Black, Asian or Minority Ethnicity, BAME).



This suggests over 2000² young people were involved in this project, either by attending an event or acting as a young leader at the event. Of these, 8% were reported as having special educational needs and 4% as from Black Asian, minority ethnic backgrounds (BAME). For both categories this is a lower proportion than nationally representative in English schools.

For more detail, please see table 1 in appendix 1.

Research approach

The research aimed to evaluate the feasibility of the alternative competition formats piloted and to gain insight and advice into how they could be successfully implemented in the future as well as understanding any potential benefits.

² 1998 young people reported + one school reported the whole year group

Research activities

- 12 pilot alternative competition observations
- 10 School Games Organiser in depth phone calls
- 1 event organiser discussion (for other events this was the SGO so covered in previous research activity)
- 56 young people intercept interviews
- 31 teacher intercept interviews
- Feedback from parents at 3 events (Leicestershire x2 and Angmering)
- Two written case studies submitted by each SGO on each pilot event conducted (n=19)

Event observations

12 pilot event observations were conducted, all SGO areas received one observation and for two, both events were observed (Leicester and Hertfordshire). These observations used a semi-structured checklist gathering insight on the young people participating, opportunities for leadership and observations of staff and spectators.

Table 1 outlines the number of young people, spectators and staff involved with the event observations.

NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING	NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEADERSHIP / VOLUNTEERING ROLES	NUMBER OF SPECTATORS	NUMBER OF SCHOOL STAFF
1016	116	100+	170 (including teachers and SGO)

Table 1: observation reach

Alternative Competition Formats

Overview matrix table

The desk research identified eight themes across the different alternative competition formats. Table 2 (p.8) summarises all the approaches and themes the adaptations apply they apply to.

- Theme 1: Widening the competition environment to develop character and life skills
- Theme 2: Adapting the scoring to develop different sports skills
- Theme 3: Adding fun elements to engage new audiences
- Theme 4: Widening the competition environment to improve health
- Theme 5: Adapting the format to increase motivation
- Theme 6: Considering age or maturity levels to support fair competition and foster social connections
- Theme 7: Using technology to develop physical skills
- Theme 8: Adapting the competition environment to support individual development in sport

	THEME 1	THEME 2	THEME 3	THEME 4	THEME 5	THEME 6	THEME 7	THEME 8
Brighton tag rugby	✓		✓					
Blackpool basketball festival	✓		✓		✓			
Blackpool MATP festival			✓	✓				
Leicester handball festival	✓	✓	✓		✓			
Leicester Fast 5s Netball		✓	✓		✓			
Nottingham dodgeball	✓	✓	✓					✓
Nottingham football games	✓	✓	✓					✓
Cavendish change 4 life			✓					✓
Cavendish Secondary walking futsal		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Chorley Boccia					✓			
Chorley 3v3 basketball		✓			✓			✓
Cornwall LOC netball and rugby	✓	✓	✓		✓			
East Riding powerplay netball	✓	✓	✓					
East Riding Football festival	✓	✓						
Heysham Basketball	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Heysham walking football	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Cornwall waking netball, football and tag rugby		✓			✓			
Tonbridge mini basketball	✓				✓			
Tonbridge bio-banding	✓					✓		

Table 2: the pilot events and associated themes

Table 2 highlights how it is clear that some themes of variation were more popular for this pilot than others. The themes identified through the desk research considered examples and literature across the general global population and so may not all be as relevant to events for school aged young people. Theme 7 was outside the scope of this pilot study, however current work is being done in other YST projects to consider the use of TopYa which would fit under this approach.

Competitions by type of variation

The majority of pilot events included a range of variations within their alternative competition offer. All did this in a different way including those variations that they felt would work for the event they were organising. Of the variations, the most used was alternative scoring and the least used was personal challenges. This research section explores the research findings under the different types of formats adopted.

Alternative scoring

This approach adapts the scoring to what may be seen in the traditional variation of the game. Pilots took four different approaches to using alternative scoring

- Scoring for attempts / near shots: for example being close to the jack in Boccia, or hitting the ring / backboard in basketball
- Scoring for game outcome: for example two points for a win, one for a draw and half for a loss as opposed to game score
- Scoring for skills: for example, opportunity to gain extra points for saves, tackles or tricks during the game
- Scoring for sportsmanship behaviour: for example marking teams or individuals for examples of sportsmanship

In addition, some pilot events combined power plays with alternative scoring, where the scores were changed during a power play period (see next section for more information on power play).

SGOs felt that using alternative scoring approaches helped to engage all young people. It supported young people to feel that they still had a role and could contribute to the team score. The pilot events that awarded points for sportsmanship reported seeing an increase in the atmosphere and happiness of young people. This was reinforced by the sportsmanship points being valued equally to winning points. It was also reported that using alternative scoring methods where skills were rewarded there was an increase in the quality of skills in the game, for example spacing improved.

Key learning around this approach included making sure that all involved in the event were aware of the alternative scoring approach being used, and make sure that young people are aware of the rules and are supported to use them to their full advantage. This is especially the case when multiple differentiations are introduced, or when working with younger children.

Football Festival (Y5/6) East Riding SSP

East Riding held a year 5 and 6 football festival that used alternative scoring as part of their alternative approach. This was to try to focus on effort as opposed to just winning. The alternative scoring used included

Win = 2 points
Draw = 1.5 points
Lost = 1 point
Shot on target = 1 point
Save by the Goal Keeper = 1 point
Sportsmanship = 1, 2 or 3 points

The format gave young people more opportunities to score points through activities and through sportsmanship. The approach was well received by both participants and staff and the simple scoring approach was easily understood by the participants. Having points for a 'loss' meant that all

teams ended up with at least some points which reinforced engagement levels. The teachers also felt that it was nice to have a focus on sportsmanship within the competition.

The same format was used at a similar event the following week and was even more successful as the young leaders were more confident and the young people were more aware of the score changes. There is a suggestion that it may take time to embed a new approach but that it is worth it for the increased engagement and participation.

Excellent night! Great to have a focus on sportsmanship! All the children have had a brilliant night and have loved the opportunity to represent our school. *Mrs Sharp, Marshlands Primary School*

A Super night great to see more than winning and losing. Children have fully taken on board the respect side and we will be looking to see that in their other sports. Thanks again sports leaders!

Mr Bennett, Boothferry Primary School

Power play

Power plays offer a temporary advantage and an opportunity for a temporary change in the game. Power plays were used in two main ways in the pilots

- Double points during power play: for example, a goal that is normally worth one, is worth two
- Changes in the alternative competition adaptation during power play: for example, in walking variations can run, scoring for hitting the backboard / ring in basketball

Most of the pilots that used power plays used music as the mechanism, one pilot event used a card system to be played when each team decided. However, the structure used varied across pilots, for example some used a random approach to when the power play happened, whereas for others the power play always happened at the same point in each game.

Power plays and the use of music were a continual positive theme across feedback from all stakeholders. SGOs felt that the biggest benefit of the power play was increasing engagement for players, those on the side and spectators. It created an atmosphere that increased participation and intensity of physical activity.

“the music was a good re-engaging mechanism”

SGO

Some older participants also began to use the power play tactically for increasing their scores. One SGO did note that the impact of power plays was slightly lost when the overall score was not being

U11 Mixed Basketball inter-competition - Cavendish

Cavendish held an U11 basketball inter-competition for their pilot event. It was played in a round robin format and utilised power plays. Within a 1 minute power play the scoring changed. Players received 1 point for hitting the backboard, 2 points for hitting the ring and 4 points for scoring a basket. Outside of the power play the scoring was 2 points for a basket and 1 point for hitting the ring. Additionally, teams were required to have a minimum of two girls on the court at all times.

The power play added a lot of value to the game and really engaged all young people. It also involved the supporters and the noise levels increased rapidly during the music power plays. The whole atmosphere was full of excitement during the power play. During the power play the young people focused on shooting and the skill level sometimes decreased in their attempt to score during the limited period.

Young leaders controlled all of the games successfully, both scoring and refereeing. A good level of sportsmanship and team work was observed with young people shaking hands and encouraging each other. The event was considered a great success.

captured as young people were not as engaged. It is important that when using power play staff support the young people to consider how to use them effectively.

Sportsmanship / value awards

This was done in a variety of different ways across the pilots but all with the underlying idea of rewarding more young people, and especially those that may not typically be recognised. Pilots utilised both team and individual awards either voted for by the young people themselves as players, young leaders or staff. Some of the pilots combined these points with game scoring points, giving each equal value which reinforced the importance of sportsmanship and teamwork.

SGOs felt that using these award systems helped to increase engagement and enjoyment and give young people a sense of achievement. They also reported seeing increased displays of teamwork and sportsmanship behaviour.

It is important when using awards that those awarding them are supported, for example through criteria to ensure that the awards are consistent and supports decision making.

Selection criteria

Year 4/5 Dodgeball – Nottingham

For this competition, participants who had not previously represented their school were provided with the opportunity to participate in competitive sport.

This meant that new and different young people were involved in the event, giving them the opportunity to increase their social skills and understand fair play. There was a 'no coaching' rule which allowed participants to enjoy the game without excessive instruction. This encouraged teamwork and enhanced enjoyment.

*Relayed from a pupil via a teacher in school:
"This is brilliant, I've never got to represent the school before; it's amazing, I even get to wear the school kit! I love dodgeball!"*

Netball and Rugby alternative formats – Cornwall

For netball, teams were asked to nominate another team based on their demonstration of the School Games Values: Passion, Self-Belief, Respect, Honesty, Determination and Teamwork. Bonus points were given to the team(s) that were voted for by their peers. This was then combined with win/draw scores to create an overall score.

For rugby a bonus point per game was allocated for the 'moment of the match'. This was allocated by the referee to the team that demonstrated the most outstanding element of creativity. Again this was combined with the win/draw points to create an overall score.

All pilots that used this variation for their alternative approach applied specific selection criteria for young people attending the event. Across all pilots this was to enable young people who do not normally represent their school in sport the opportunity to do so. One pilot event also invited young people who had had a negative experience of competition previously.

SGOs reported that this approach increased the opportunities for more young people to represent their school and therefore gives them the opportunity to access the benefits that doing so provides. It also gave young people the chance to be involved and engage with new formats and/or sports that they had not experienced previously. Overall it helped to promote participation in sport and physical activity.

Skills focus

Four pilots incorporated some form of skills focus into their event. This varied in the way it was applied. Two of the pilot events used a skills session before games to give young people the opportunity to develop skills before applying them. One of these events also continued the skills focus throughout the games, using a skills challenge on the spare court during play. One pilot event included a skill shooting contest between each game. The final pilot event was a Motor Activity Training Programme (MATP) festival and focused specifically on skills development over game play throughout the event.

All SGOs felt that including a skills practice in the event worked to increase young people's skills which they could then apply to a game situation. The event that included the skills challenge alongside game play also reported that a benefit was that it gave those young people who were not playing something to do.

Basketball festival – Heysham

This basketball festival was organised for primary schools in the local area and aimed to award effort and skill.

Each school was given an individual scorecard that was filled out by the teacher throughout the event, as they took part in various basketball activities. Schools were set a target score.

The event was split in half with the first half focused on skills and the second on game play. There were 4 different basketball drills which were delivered by the Sports Leaders. These were: Tackling, dribbling, shooting and passing. Schools joined together and rotated around. Sports leaders delivered the drills and marked the young people out of 10 for effort on their activity. The aim with these activities was to coach the correct techniques and give the participants practice in the basic basketball skills to allow them to achieve success in the matches.

Each team then played 5 matches, tried to accumulate as many points in each one with the teacher putting the scores for the games on their scorecard. During the game play, one court was used for a skills session, which included: How many baskets could be scored in 2 minutes. How many times you could dribble through a course. How many times you could pass the ball successfully through the whole team. Again, these points were added to the scorecards.

All points were combined and there was a presentation. Each participant received a certificate. Every school managed to get over the 20-point threshold, but rather than a trophy each school got their own basketball, so they could continue to play at their school.

“Dribbling/tackling/shooting drills were brilliant” Young person

“Fun, learning new skills, increasing confidence” Teacher

Player rotation

Player rotation was used in two different ways, rolling subs and a more structured player rotation throughout the game, for example changing position every half in a specified order.

SGOs reported that this increased participation and gave young people the opportunity to try different positions. However, it was sometimes found to be difficult to manage, and needed a member of staff to oversee the rotation and support each team. This was especially true for rolling subs, to ensure that all young people were involved.

Walking variations

This variation involved walking versions of traditional games. It gave an opportunity to level the playing field for young people and focus on skills such as strategy and position.

This approach was not seen as successful as others, many young people involved in these pilots struggled to get used to the variation and struggled with the frustration of not being able to run. Young people took more time to get used to this approach. Two of the pilot events included a power play into the walking variation due to the cold weather, when asked which they preferred, young people involved in these events preferred the times that they could run. However, SGOs did report that using a walking variation allowed young people the opportunity to develop skills without the pressure of speed which was effective for some young people.

It is important to consider the environment and audience when using walking variations of traditional competitions.

Alternative team formats

Two main methods were used for this, changing teams based on gender and number of players. For example, one pilot had girls playing the first half and boys playing the second. Another pilot used an 'in out' balance, with 7v5 and then 5v7.

Young people enjoyed the alternative team formats, although they were used in collaboration with other variations so their impact cannot be necessarily separated. The pilot event that used the 'in out' balance found that this change did not actually overall impact on the score but was engaging and did provide extra challenge by encouraging young people to play strategically.

Sin bin

One SGO area piloted the use of sin bins across both of their pilot events. This was through the use of a 'player card' that they could use to remove a player from the opposite team. It was found that it worked more effectively for the secondary aged participants, with the primary aged participants not particularly engaged in using the card. By the end of the event the secondary aged participants had begun to use the card and think more tactically about how they used it. There was some concern voiced by staff about the negative experience of being removed from play even though it was only for two minutes.

Bio-banding

Two pilot events used bio-banding. This was done by height. There were some difficulties in splitting pupils in this way and SGOs reported a need for more support and evidence of what works in this approach in order to support teachers to run events in this way in the future.

Personal challenge

One pilot used a Change4Life festival as their event. This involved young people rotating through activities and competing against themselves on their second go. It was found that this was an effective approach to encourage young people to try harder to improve. Young people were engaged and enjoyed participating and taking part.

Delivery Elements

This section reviews two key elements of delivery: communication of the alt comp formats and the use of young leaders.

Communication

SGOs are experienced at organising events and communicating with the schools in their area. Therefore, the communications about the pilot events was generally seen as successful for the pilot. Most SGOs provided pre-event information for schools and then followed this up with a briefing at the event. This also gave an opportunity for young people to ask questions if they were unsure. Generally, most young people seemed to understand the variations piloted.

Young leaders

7 out of the 10 SGO areas used young leaders for their pilot events. This varied from one entire event being run by young people to young people providing event support. The most common role for young leaders was in officiating, either refereeing or keeping scores. Young leaders were also involved in the values scoring and delivering skill development sessions. It was seen that young leader's involvement was most successful when the young leaders felt confident about their role and were confident with the rules and format. This supported them to be able to take control.

Young people participating were also given the opportunity to lead on aspects of events. For example, participants were involved in voting for spirit awards, when to use player cards and for rolling subs. This helped them to feel as though they had an influence over and ownership of the event.

Outcomes for young people

Through the research activities conducted a number of benefits have been identified for young people participating in alternative competition formats. Over all the variations the aim was to increase participation in sport and physical activity and it was felt that all pilot events using different alternative variations contributed to this. In addition, benefits identified included;

- ✓ Increased engagement and enjoyment
- ✓ Inclusive atmosphere with increased participation for all
- ✓ Increased sportsmanship and teamwork
- ✓ Increased skill development and quality of game play
- ✓ Increased opportunity to think strategically and tactically
- ✓ Increased sense of achievement
- ✓ Increased confidence to participate in sport and physical activity
- ✓ Promoted participation across those young people who might not have actively participated previously

Additionally the pilot events provided an opportunity for young people to undertake leadership roles and support the SGOs in officiating and leading events.

Views of Alternative Competition Formats

This section explores the views of alternative competition formats.

- **Over three quarters** (77%) of young people responded that they would like to do this new approach **ALL** the time
- **100%** of teachers responded that they would like to do this approach either **ALL** or **SOME** of the time
- **Nearly half** (48%) of teachers responded that they would like to do this approach **ALL** the time

Stakeholder insight

Informal feedback was gathered at the events from the main observer through intercept style interviews with parents (if available), young people and teachers / school staff. These followed a structured question format.

Young people feedback

All young people reported that they understood all the changes to the approach. All reported that they would prefer to do this approach all the time.

When asked what they liked best about the new approach, three key themes that emerged,

- They liked the adapted scoring / opportunity to score extra points
- They liked the music
- The new approach was fun / engaging.

Most young people reported that there was nothing they did not like about the new approach, although a small number mentioned that they struggled to adapt to the new approach for example remembering not to run. A small number of young people also mentioned that they did not like the addition of the music as it was distracting.

Teacher / school staff feedback

All staff spoken to were positive in how the event and changes had been communicated with them. Predominantly this was done through emails and then reinforced again at the event.

The majority of teachers felt that the changes to the event had a positive effect on their young people involved. For a few events the sport (for example, handball) was new for the young people and therefore they were less aware of the alternative approaches changes and did not know any different.

Teaching staff reported that they felt that the alternative approaches were inclusive and engaged and motivated young people. A couple of teachers reported that some children struggled to adapt to the new variation to begin with and needed more time to understand it.

The main challenge reported by teachers was the logistical difficulties of attending the event, primarily this centred around transport issues and if the event was during school time, getting cover teachers. All teachers reported that they felt the alternative approaches should continue either some of the time or all the time.

‘Very impressed, they want to score points, it is very enjoyable and they have strategically thought about it. It is giving confidence to those that don't usually score baskets.’ Teacher

'increased confidence - a timid girl has come out of herself and is loving it' Teacher

'having a skills practice session at the beginning, allowed them to practice first and understand the rules then slow the game down and increase their skills and practice' Teacher

Parent feedback

At some events there was the opportunity to talk to parents / spectators. Parents were generally positive about the changes, although not all fully understood them. They enjoyed the atmosphere that the music created and the impact it had on the games. All thought that the alternative approaches should be continued.

'it increases engagement and enthusiasm – support each other and increases the speed at which the game is played at' Parent

Strengths and benefits

As part of the in-depth interviews, SGOs were asked what they thought were the main strengths of alternative competition and how the young people had benefited.

The four main strengths that emerged were that events,

- were inclusive
- supported skill development
- were fun and engaging
- and gave an opportunity for young people to be involved that may not have previously.

Additional benefits identified were that they gave a space for recognising sportsmanship and values as well as winning, they increased young people's confidence, social skills and team work and increased motivation to be physically active. The opportunity for leadership for young people was also mentioned. The impact on transition was a perhaps unexpected benefit mentioned by one SGO, this was mainly due to the competition taking place at the secondary school and therefore enabling young people at primary school to have the experience of attending the secondary school.

Areas for improvement

SGOs were also asked whether they felt there were any areas for improvement within alternative competition formats. Six key points emerged.

- Avoid overloading events with multiple variations: it was sometimes confusing for young people and staff to be aware of all of the variations when multiple variations were included at one event
- Ensure consistency and clarity around how to award the sportsmanship or team player awards
- Ensure that when young leaders were leading or officiating they are always confident in the new approach and consistently applying the new variations
- Sometimes as the sport itself was new, the alternative format was lost slightly, this is just something to be aware of
- For variations where player rotation or player time was a key aspect it is important to support staff to monitor this as it was not done consistently
- Consider how to best change the mindset of those involved to the alternative format, both young people and adults.

Sustainability

All SGOs see this approach as sustainable. As there are many different variations and approaches, schools can choose the elements that work for them in different situations and use them. It is unlikely that alternative competitions would work in every sport and every setting, but likely that it will work for a large majority given the appropriate support. This pilot study has helped SGOs / LOCs and schools to experience the benefits of alternative competition approaches and to see how it helps address the bigger challenge of getting more young people active. One SGO is developing guidance for their schools to support them to try their own variations.

Recommendations

The recommendations that emerged from this pilot study can be separated into general and specific, general recommendations can be applied across all types of alternative approaches whereas specific recommendations relate to specific types of alternative competition formats.

Of the approaches, many pilot events included adapted scoring and / or power plays. Both were found to be effective. Adapted scoring provides an effective and simple approach to encourage and motivate young people. The use of music worked to engage young people and create a fun atmosphere.

Specific recommendations related to improving piloted approaches includes:

- Tracking player time: for those variations where player rotation or player time is an aspect, it is important to support staff to monitor this to make sure that all young people are involved and get a chance to play.
- Awards: support staff and young people to identify those for awards (if applicable) using a standardised checklist, this ensures consistency and supports decision making.
- Walking variations: consider the environment and audience involved with the pilot, for example external factors like the weather can impact on engagement and enjoyment.

Overall four key recommendations emerged from this pilot which can support future alternative competition events.

- Focus on one or two alternative variations for initial events. This ensures that all participants are involved and fully understand the approach. Overloading an event with too many adaptations can be confusing.
- Ensure that young leaders have an adequate understanding of the alternative approach and feel confident to lead the activity.
- Consider how best to support the change in mindset. Some schools, young people and spectators may need support to adapt to the alternative approach, be clear on the benefits to support this and clearly communicate the changes in advance.
- Communicate clearly with all participants. Send the information about the event and alternative variations being used to the teacher attending the event and ask them to disseminate to young people. At the event run an introductory briefing to ensure all young people are aware of the changes. Also have handouts available for teachers and spectators to make sure are all clear on the purpose of the event.

Conclusions

The School Games Review recommendation aimed to promote enjoyment and avoid negative experiences of competition for young people. This pilot study demonstrated the place for alternative competition formats to do both of these things. It also highlighted examples of good practice, and offered top tips for implementation to support the delivery of alternative competition formats in the future.

Appendix 1: Table 1 – Overview of areas, reach and adaptation

AREA	LEAD SCHOOL	SGO AREA	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS INVOLVED	YP INVOLVED	SEND	BAME	ADULTS INVOLVED	OVERVIEW OF ADAPTATION
Brighton	Angmering School	Southern Area	7 Primary schools	72 Y3 and Y4 girls 32 Young Leaders	2	4	1 member of staff 67 parents 14 teachers	Y3 and Y4 Girls Tag Rugby
Blackpool		Blackpool LA	10 Primary schools	54 boys 44 girls 16 Young Leaders	4	11	2 SGO support team 2 College basketball coaches	Y5/6 Basketball festival
Blackpool	Highfurlong School	Blackpool LA		4 boys 6 girls	10	1	1 sports coach 4 teachers	Blackpool MATP Festival
Leicester	Bosworth Academy	Hinkley and Bosworth School Sport & Physical Activity Network	6 Primary schools	44 boys 39 girls	7	7		Handball festival for Y3/4
Leicester	Bosworth Academy	Hinkley and Bosworth School Sport & Physical Activity Network	3 Secondary schools	10 boys 16 girls	0	1		Y9 Fast 5s Netball
Nottingham	Alderman White School	Broxtowe SGO	6 Primary schools	69 Y7/8 pupils 74 Y4/5 pupils (50/50 gender split)	14			Intra / inter school dodgeball
Nottingham	Alderman White School	Broxtowe SGO	Primary school	All pupils in Y3-Y6 within PE lessons				Intra school football games

Hertfordshire	The Cavendish School		6 schools	Total 190 - 98 boys 92 girls	Boys 16 Girls 7	22	Staff from schools and volunteers	Change 4 Life festival
Hertfordshire	The Cavendish School		1 school	14 girls (Y9)			1 member of staff 2 male young leaders from the school	Secondary Walking Futsal
Lancashire	Buckshaw Primary	Chorley SSP	15 schools	54 boys 29 girls	39 boys 18 girls		Members of staff from each school and parents	Boccia tournament
Lancashire	Buckshaw Primary	Chorley SSP	1 school	24 boys (Y9) 18 girls (Y8)	2		2 adults (SGO and Basketball coach) and Head of Department observing	3v3 Basketball competition
Cornwall		Cornwall SSP	Netball 20 secondary schools Rugby 17 secondary schools	234 girls (Y7/Y8) 255 boys (Y8)				Netball and Rugby rotation
East Riding	Woldgate College	East Riding SSP		10 boys 50 girls	2	2		Power play netball
East Riding	Goole Academy	East Riding SSP	8 schools	53 boys	8	20	12 staff Parent help SSCo and 12 leaders	Y5/6 Football festival
Morecambe	Bay Leadership Academy	Heysham SGO	1 Secondary school	37 boys (Y3/4) 17 girls (Y3/4)	7 (Y3/4)	4	19 primary school staff	Basketball competition

			9 primary schools 1 FE college	20 sports leaders (Y7-10) (9 boys, 11 girls)	2 (Young leaders)		17 parent volunteers 60+ parents watching 1 SGO	
Morecambe	Bay Leadership Academy	Heysham SGO	1 school	45 boys (Y7) 45 girls (Y7) 14 NCS leaders (6 girls, 8 boys)	27	3		Y7 Walking football
Cornwall	Poltair School		11 schools	95 girls 136 boys			15	Walking Netball, football and tag-rugby
Tonbridge	Skidders School	Tonbridge SGO	14 primary schools 1 secondary school 1 community club	83 boys 59 girls	1	14	4 adults	Mini basketball competition
Tonbridge	The Hayesbrook School	Tonbridge SGO	1 school	36 participants			2 adults	Bio-banding

Appendix 2: Desktop research



Alternative
Competition Format

YST RESEARCH

The Youth Sport Trust (YST) is a national children's charity passionate about creating a future where every child enjoys the life-changing benefits that come from play and sport. YST Research offers research, analysis, insight and evaluation services to organisations with an interest in the wider children and young people's sector. Our research expertise is focussed on improving the wellbeing of children and young people through sport and physical activity.

Our specialisms include:

- Education, PE and school sport
- Community sport / clubs
- Early years settings
- Life skills and employability
- Activism and volunteering
- Health (physical, social and emotional)

For our latest research findings, see our impact report [here](#).

By working with us, you are supporting us to achieve our mission to improve children's lives and their future.

Contact us:

Youth Sport Trust

SportPark Loughborough
University
3 Oakwood Drive
Loughborough
Leicestershire LE11 3QF

T 01509 226600
E RESEARCH@YOUTHSPORTTRUST.ORG
W WWW.YOUTHSPORTTRUST.ORG
@YOUTHSPORTTRUST
YOUTHSPORTTRUST

Registered Charity Number 1086915
Registered Company Number
4180163