

2. GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

MAKING SPORT OPEN
TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

All young people should have equal opportunity to participate in sport¹. Increasing access to junior sport has many advantages in increasing the number of people who

- benefit from their participation
- later become volunteers and leaders
- are part of the talent pool for elite sport.

Although *sport for all* is a major objective for contemporary sport providers, marginalisation still occurs on the basis of ability, body shape, disability* ethnicity, gender and sexuality, geographical location, and socio-economic status.

Concerns with access and equity are magnified when young people belong to more than one of these groups.

It is important to recognise these issues in order to meet the challenge of all young people having *the fundamental right to be physically active and play sport*.

Ability

Young people vary in their sporting ability with regard to their natural predisposition to develop skills.

It is important that all young people, despite their current ability level are given the opportunity to reach their potential.

Some young people perceive they are not good enough to participate. Sport providers must take care they do not give out negative vibes about a young person's ability, to avoid discouraging them.

2.1 Strategies – Ability

- Provide equal opportunity for young people regardless of their ability to reach their potential.
- Avoid letting the need to win override giving all young people a fair go.
- Avoid indicating any negative perceptions about the ability of a participant.

Body Shape

Some young people have a negative body image because of how they perceive their body shape and size. This can

- deter their involvement in sport, and
- prevent them establishing long term patterns of physical activity.

Compounding this problem, young people sensitive about their appearance can be discouraged by popular stereotypes of the images of elite athletes and other young people in the media.

Sport providers can also use a young person's body shape to negatively judge their ability and interest in sport.

Guarding against young people missing out on a sporting opportunity either because of their perceptions of their shape, or the bias of a sports provider, is paramount.

It must be remembered that a young person's current shape may only be temporary, and with maturity they may have a completely different one.

In addition, a whole range of body shapes is needed for different sports (eg gymnastics and discus throwing).

¹ This meets Australia's obligations as a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and its adherence to the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport.

2.2 Strategies - Body Shape

- Be aware of the anxiety associated with evaluations of young people's bodies.
- Avoid creating situations where attention is focused on the critical appraisal of young people's bodies.
- Consider flexibility in rules for uniforms to cater for all body shapes.
- Do not make judgements related to sporting ability or future potential based on body shape.

Disability

Young people with a disability enjoy their sporting experiences in the same ways as young people who do not have a disability.

Sport providers have a responsibility to create opportunities for all young people, including young people with a disability. This means providing a range of opportunities that

- require no adaptation and are fully inclusive of young people with a disability
- require some adaptation to include young people with a disability
- are only for young people with a disability.

Providing these opportunities for young people with a disability often means making adjustments to programs and services.

Disability sport organisations also provide opportunities for young people with specific disabilities. These allow

- opportunities for specialisation in specific events
- tailored coaching for specific needs
- pathways for elite sporting experiences.

2.3 Strategies - Disability

- Provide opportunities in your sport for young people with disabilities.
- Educate and support parents/carers in encouraging and assisting their young people with disabilities to participate in sport.
- Educate sport providers to help them include young people with disabilities into programs and services (eg provide welcoming environments).
- Provide assistance to schools in catering for young people with disabilities
- Make your facilities and services accessible for young people with disabilities.

Ethnicity

Young people from some cultural backgrounds (eg Asian and Middle Eastern) have low rates of participation in sporting activities.

Sport providers should implement strategies to encourage participation of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds in a wide variety of sports in order to

- reduce real or perceived differences in opportunities
- promote cultural diversity in sporting experiences for all young people
- provide access to a wider cross section of the Australian population
- enable young people from all backgrounds to compete at the highest levels.

2.4 Strategies - Ethnicity

- Work with community leaders and leaders of CLD groups to improve sport opportunities for young people from CLD backgrounds.
- Market junior sport programs specifically to encourage young people from CLD backgrounds to participate in sport.
- Provide support for administrators for CLD groups to integrate their participants into competitions.
- Provide opportunities for CLD parents/carers to be involved in junior sport as coaches, officials and administrators.
- Be flexible (eg uniform requirements and playing days) to avoid infringing cultural and religious beliefs and practices.
- Provide cross-cultural training for junior sport providers.

Gender and Sexuality

Some young people avoid sporting situations because they perceive they do not conform to the stereotype associated with the sport.

There can be a tendency for people to value

- specific sports for each sex (eg football for boys)
- specific skills (eg catching, striking)
- dominant sexualities
- behaviours such as aggression, competitiveness and risk-taking.

This has resulted in some girls and boys leaving sport in their early adolescent years. To encourage young people to stay in sport they should feel they are valued.

Further, the ways activities are presented can cater for different needs. Offering mixed sex competitions for adolescents, especially when sport is played for recreation, can help make sport more attractive for some young people. Others are more comfortable participating with their own sex.

2.5 Strategies – Gender and Sexuality

- Target girls or boys with specific programs for developing their skills and confidence.
- Offer a choice of single-sex or mixed teams and competitions.
- Deal with any situation where a young person is being treated in an abusive way by their peers or other people.

Geographical Location

Young people from rural and remote regions can be disadvantaged because of

- limited expertise and facilities in the community
- the distances to travel for training, coaching and competitions
- the additional costs and time to participate
- the limited number of young people available to play
- a lack of competition
- the lack of a high performance coaching environment

Sport providers should try to accommodate the special situations faced by young people from rural and remote communities (eg provide coaching clinics, development officers).

Parents/carers should be encouraged to become involved as they play a significant role in supporting their children's participation.

2.6 Strategies – Geographical Location

- Modify activities to increase opportunities for participation (eg reduced team size, mixed sex/age teams, using parents and teachers to make up a team).
- Provide mini-competitions to suit local playing base and conditions.
- Increase opportunities to travel (eg parent rosters, car pooling, bus transport)
- Assist with accommodation and travel for training and competition away from home.
- Provide a pathway from rural and remote communities to urban-based sport.
- Provide opportunities for high performance coaching in rural and remote communities.
- Consider how communities can work together to provide services.

Guideline 2 - Getting Young People Involved

Indigenous Australians

Many Indigenous Australians have achieved high status as athletes, but not in a wide range of sports.

Indigenous young people are also generally not well represented in sport and girls even less so than boys.

Sport providers should appreciate the challenges (cultural, social, geographical, economic and gendered) confronting Indigenous young people.

They should also

- encourage Indigenous young people to participate in sport
- provide help with coaching and resources and offer places to gifted Indigenous young people in talent development programs
- encourage the participation of respected Indigenous community members to influence Indigenous young people.

2.7 Strategies - Indigenous Australians

- Assist in establishing junior competitions in Indigenous urban, rural and remote communities, and make sure there are links to a range of competitions.
- Provide education and development for Indigenous sport providers.
- Provide coaching expertise, resources and opportunities for Indigenous young people.
- Offer culturally relevant support for Indigenous young people who relocate to participate in sport.
- Provide cross-cultural awareness training available through State/Territory Departments of Sport and Recreation for all sports providers working with Indigenous young people.
- Assist with travel to allow participation of Indigenous young people.

Socio-economic Status

Social class and socio-economic status are powerful factors determining opportunities for sport participation.

Young people from families with limited incomes experience fewer sporting opportunities because of the expenses involved in

- fees, uniforms, shoes and equipment

- access to transport, funding travel and accommodation for representative teams.

Uniforms are important because they give a sense of belonging. However, limiting uniform requirements to inexpensive items that can be worn at other times is helpful.

Overall, sport providers need to appreciate the connection between socio-economic status and sporting opportunities.

Providing conditions so young people from a wide cross section of society can participate benefits both the young people and the sport.

2.8 Strategies – Socio-economic Status

- Encourage community involvement in supporting young people from low socio-economic areas.
- Partner with organisations servicing low socio economic areas (eg Salvation Army, Red Cross).
- Investigate offering opportunities in schools located in low socio-economic areas.
- Lower or eliminate participation fees for young people from low socio-economic areas.
- Assist by lending equipment.
- Reduce the need to buy uniforms (eg make club and school uniforms the same, or just wear anything of a certain colour).
- Coordinate and subsidise assistance for travel to and from training and competition (eg sport bus for all community sporting groups to use).
- Assist low socio-economic young people selected for representative teams.

Equity of Opportunity

Equity of opportunity is an ethical issue as well as an area of legal vulnerability for sport providers (see Guideline 9, *The Law and Sport*).

This means sports providers must not discriminate against young people because of their ability, body shape, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, geographical location, race or socio-economic status when making decisions about

- who is selected to play or compete
- who is provided with the best facilities and times for training and competing
- who becomes a selector, coach, official or sport administrator
- how opportunities are made available.

2.9 Strategies - Equity of Opportunity

- Provide equal opportunity for all young people to participate.
- Write a selection policy and distribute it to everybody involved.
- Check to make sure selection policies are being implemented.
- Monitor selection guidelines to gauge how well they are helping decision making.

Key Message

Addressing access and equity issues will increase the opportunities for young people to enjoy sport and fulfil their goals.

With sport being such a valuable opportunity not only to socialise, but to improve health and well being, removing barriers is vital for increasing participation of young Australians.

Key Points - Getting Young People Involved

- Sport should be available to all young people.
- Some young people may not be given the chance to reach their potential because of their perceived sporting ability.
- Many young people are influenced by the stereotype of what they think an athlete should look like and be like.
- Sport providers must take care not to judge a young person's ability and interest in sport by their body shape.
- Young people with disabilities should have dual pathways through integrated sport and disability sport.
- Participation of young people from CLD backgrounds can be very sport-specific with rates of overall participation generally lower than for Anglo-Celtic backgrounds.
- Values and stereotypes associated with sport often work against girls, and some boys, participating in sport.
- Young people in some rural and remote areas have fewer opportunities to participate in a wide range of sports.
- Indigenous young people have excelled in some sports, but are not widely represented in all junior sports.
- Young people from low socio-economic groups have fewer opportunities and find it more difficult to participate in sport than those from high socio-economic groups.
- Sport providers need to make equitable decisions so that opportunities for individuals are not affected by ability, body shape, disability, ethnicity, gender, geographical location, socio-economic status or sexuality.
- Providing access and equity for young people in sport is not only an ethical and legal issue, but also leads to
 - ◇ young people being motivated to stay involved in sport in the long-term
 - ◇ an increase in the size of the talent pool for elite performance.

Further Reading

Briefing Papers

1. *Historical, Cultural and Social Perspectives of Junior Sport in Australia*
2. *Trends in Sport and Physical Activity Participation in Australian Children and Youth*

Guidelines

- 9 The Law and Sport

Case Studies

1. **Wilson Go-Go Golf** illustrates the modification of a sport to increase access for young people who otherwise might not experience a particular sport.
2. **Hastings Council Funding Program for Junior Sport** illustrates a scheme to help young people with financial assistance for competitions.
3. **Kwinana Recreational Voucher Scheme** illustrates a program providing access to youth sports for financially disadvantaged families.
4. **Open Boundaries – Fairer Playing Fields** illustrates a project to integrate newcomers from CLD backgrounds into a community.
5. **Kids in Action** shows how young people can acquire skills together in an inclusive environment.

Resources

Getting it Right: Guidelines for Selection.

Australian Sports Commission
<http://www.ausport.gov.au/ASC/corpdocs/getting>

Project CONNECT. Australian Sports Commission and Australian Paralympic Committee

<http://www.ausport.gov.au/connect/>

Modified Sport: A Quality Junior Sport Approach Australian Sports Commission

1. Wilson Go-Go Golf

Wilson Go-Go Golf is a program designed for upper primary and lower secondary school children. It emphasises fun, skills development and participation in a safe environment.

It is endorsed by the Australian Sports Commission with State Golf Associations. The aim is to introduce golf to children who would otherwise not have the opportunity.

Go-Go Golf is a modified game that

- can be taught in various locations and
- includes specially designed equipment such as golf clubs, balls and golf courses sized for children.

Combining this modified equipment with general equipment at schools and clubs increases the likelihood of success. For instance, Hula Hoops rather than small in-ground holes are used.

The program includes

- an instructors manual outlining 6 different sessions to develop arm and hand action, posture and alignment, grip and chipping
- games and activities at various skill development levels.

Teachers, parents or student volunteers (they don't need golf experience) can teach **Go-Go Golf**.

2. Hastings Council Funding Program for Junior Sport

The Mayor's Sporting Fund was established in 1999 in response to requests from athletes for financial assistance.

The Hastings Council had no budget to fund these requests but a local business suggested setting up a community-based fund.

The fund now provides financial assistance to local young people selected for state or national teams or competitions requiring

- costly travel or
- equipment purchase.

Fund raising is done by a committee comprised of 10 local business and community representatives. They also

- consider applications received by the Fund and
- promote the Fund to the local sporting community.

Administrative support is provided by the Hastings Council.

Since the Fund's inception, over \$60,000 has been allocated to more than 60 local young people from a wide variety of sports.

Money is raised at community fund-raising activities and donations are given by individuals and businesses.

The Fund has made a tangible difference to the local sporting community by supporting young people who might otherwise drop out of competitive sport due to financial pressures.

3. Kwinana Recreation Voucher Scheme

Kwinana Community Recreation Scheme provides access to youth sports for financially disadvantaged families.

As a strategy to assist parents and clubs with the cost of junior sport, the **Recreation Voucher Scheme** was devised.

Vouchers allow ratepayers to nominate \$3.50 of their rates directly to a participating junior organisation to help them purchase equipment.

The vouchers are distributed along with the annual rate notice and when all rates are received the face value of vouchers for each club is calculated and a cheque sent to the club.

Clubs must provide an annual statement of how funds have been spent.

The Kwinana Community Recreation Development Trust acts as a liaison between Council and local clubs and organisations.

The financial assistance is to provide equipment for junior participants. It has been of great benefit to an area that has a low socio-economic population by

- increasing the proportion of participating young people
- keeping club fees to a minimum.

The scheme has proved to be very popular with both clubs and ratepayers.

When the scheme first started there was a budget of \$4000 and 16 participating clubs. This has grown to 24 clubs and a budget of \$15000.

4. Open Boundaries - Fairer Playing Fields

Open Boundaries - Fairer Playing Fields makes it easier for new migrants, refugees, and people from culturally diverse backgrounds to become involved in sport.

The Northern Tasmanian Municipal Organisation gained a grant for a project called Open Boundaries – Fairer Playing Fields.

The **aim** is greater participation in sport for people of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds.

First, **barriers to participation** were identified. These included

- lack of private transport and no public transport in the evening and weekends
- high cost of sporting goods and club fees
- lack of familiarity with sport environments
- unfamiliarity with structured community based sport
- alcohol seen as a main component of clubs
- competing family commitments.

Sports clubs, facility providers and the wider community were encouraged to be more creative and flexible to increase participation of people from CLD backgrounds.

Cross cultural awareness training was provided for club administrators, players, community and youth development workers.

Targeted were more than 60 newcomers to Launceston from Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Steps in integration included

- young people from CLD backgrounds were 'buddied' with local young people from a youth group.
- entering a local basketball competition after training for several months.
- forming 2 new multicultural soccer teams and combining with a club on the verge of folding due to lack of players. (This club now supports players from Sudan, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Indonesia with a 'whole club' buddy approach sharing information, skills and equipment.).

5. Kids in Action

The Brookfield Tennis Centre has established a program for children 4 to 8 years including children with coordination difficulties or disabilities.

The aims of the program are to

- motivate children into physical activity by using bright equipment and fun games while keeping tennis as the central theme
- develop basic gross motor skills and coordination
- provide an opportunity for socialisation
- build self esteem
- let young people have fun while they acquire skills so that they will stay involved in tennis.

The structure of the program meets the changing needs of the young people as they grow and mature by altering

- session content
 - ½ tennis coaching – skill acquisition and games
 - ½ gross motor skills – activity based with each session focusing on a particular area such as balance, eye tracking, hand-eye coordination etc.
- session duration
 - 4-5 year olds – ½ hour session
 - 6-8 year olds – 1 hour session.

The program focus is to offer a structured, caring and **inclusive** environment for young people, and with its community focus, to offer an opportunity for parents to socialise.