



## Reflecting on Project Success

### Satellite Clubs

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## Introduction to Satellite Clubs

Satellite Clubs launched in 2012, as part of Sport England's Youth & Community strategy. The model involved linking community sports clubs with schools and other youth groups. The project aimed to promote active lifestyles by:

- Enabling young people, aged 11 – 25 years, to access affordable activities
- Extending the range of sports available to attract less active young people
- Providing a stepping stone from school sports to community clubs
- Offering an opportunity to increase membership of community clubs

These tie in with the 5 Government outcomes set out in **Towards an Active Nation**:

- **Physical Well-being**
- **Mental well-being**
- **Individual Development**
- **Social and Community Development**
- **Economic Development**

### Leap – The Lead Organisation for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

From the start, Leap was a lead organisation in the rollout of satellite clubs across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. We commissioned trusted local partners to undertake the delivery of sessions. These partnerships have provided a wide variety of activities, led by specialist coaches.

Although the national Programme has ended, a significant number of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Satellite Clubs continue to run. We believe that this is due to the partner organisations we worked with and a focus on ensuring the projects could be sustainable.

Satellite Clubs were initially designed to run for 5 years but was extended until March 2021. As the official project ends, we want to share some of the lesson's learned and outcomes achieved as the project has evolved.

## Achievements in Figures

The Satellite Club initiative can report many achievements, including the social and health benefits to participants and stronger ties with local sports providers. Below we share some of the key data:

- In 8 years, Leap has worked with **63 community sports clubs** and many other partners to set up **119 Satellite Clubs**
- **51 clubs are still in operation** as of 31 March 2021, although some are temporarily inactive due to COVID-19
- In total, **3458 young people have participated**; it has been roughly a 40% Male /60% Female split
- **313** Satellite Club participants have identified as **ethnically diverse**
- **284** Satellite Club participants have identified as **having a disability**

We actively targeted provision in communities where access to clubs and facilities was previously limited and where inactivity was known to be an issue. With many clubs continuing, we know that the project has had a long-term impact on these communities.

## Thank you to All Involved

We appreciate the commitment that community clubs and project partners, who have applied to planning, setting up and running the Satellite Clubs. Their efforts have engaged and motivated young people, developed skills and changed lives.

We also recognise the young people who were brave enough to take up the challenge. For many, sports participation had not previously been on their agenda. In the process, many have gained confidence, skills and friendships that improve their quality of life.

## The Early Years

Satellite Clubs was an initiative with a longer-term vision. Rather than paying clubs to increase sports coaching, it focused on collaborations between clubs, schools and other partners. From the off-set, Leap was keen to work with organisations that were willing to shape provision that could continue when the funding ended.

At the start, we used existing contacts with schools and National organisations such as the Lawn Tennis Association, Cricket Board and England Netball. The primary model was to link local clubs with secondary schools so that after-school provision could be offered by specialist coaches.

In 2013/14, Leap successfully set up 6 satellite clubs, which were attended by 109 participants. We built on these humble beginnings, learning from feedback and adapting our approach.

Successful projects were launched, with some continuing today. These include a tennis Satellite Club at Alfriston School, run by a dedicated coach from Halton and Beaconsfield Tennis Club. The girls who attend the school have a range of special educational needs, but participation in tennis has helped them to learn new skills, increase strength and grow in confidence.

<https://www.Leapwithus.org.uk/satellite-clubs/satellite-clubs-in-action/spotlight-on-alfriston-satellite-club/>

## As the Satellite Club Project Evolved

When reviewing the success of the early clubs, it was recognised that not enough of the young people that we wanted to attract were attending.

Those who were disengaged from school were highly unlikely to join afterschool sessions. Even though the coaches were not teachers, the association with the school was a barrier. Equally, many young people have to catch buses/trains to get home from school. This encouraged us to engage with other settings where young people come together, including youth clubs.

Wycombe Youth Action was one such organisation. Young people from a range of schools, cultures and backgrounds attend WYA. Leaders had recognised that many had low levels of mental health and wanted to provide activities that would build confidence. A coach from a local Taekwondo Club provided the solution.

<https://www.Leapwithus.org.uk/satellite-clubs/satellite-clubs-in-action/spotlight-martial-arts-activity-terms/>

## Working with Targeted Groups

Even within schools, the focus shifted to provision for targeted groups. An example is a project involving Leap, Greenwich Leisure Ltd, Evolve Boxing Club and Holmer Green Senior School. Here a group of disengaged pupils were demonstrating inappropriate behaviours in both school and the community. Most were not engaged in sport, were introverted and lacked focus.

An enthusiastic coach from Evolve Boxing Club had previous experience of working with young people at a Pupil Referral Unit. He made the sport accessible to the beginners, teaching them focus and discipline, as well as boxing techniques.

The identified students were encouraged to attend the weekly session, however, it was an optional after-school provision, for which a small fee was charged. Surprisingly, 10 young people attended each week, with others turning up for some sessions. Two participants have now joined Evolve Boxing Club, with two others trying a club session. The school have reported improvements in attitude and behaviour in lessons.

***“Whilst the sessions were aimed at a particular cohort, the best thing about the session is the type of individual that have attended weekly. They are the boys and girls that don’t engage with the mainstream sports, that are not fond of PE, and that do not attend a sports club outside of school. It is refreshing to see.”***

**- Community Development Manager at GLL**

There are now exploring the possibility of investing the money paid for sessions to buy equipment that can be stored at the school and used to engage more students.

### Stress Management

In another Buckinghamshire school, a Satellite Club was set up as part of a stress-management programme. Dr Challoner’s High is a selective grammar school, where high academic achievement is encouraged by pupils, parents and teachers. The pressure to perform can cause some girls to become stressed, which impacts their mental health and well-being.

Physical activity is a great way to channel stress positively, but not all of the girls were keen on P.E. or joining sports clubs. Working in partnership with a Yoga teacher, a Satellite club offered an alternative activity. Yoga is great for increasing core strength and flexibility whilst also focusing on controlled breathing techniques that can be employed during times of stress.

### Teamwork Offers a Sense of Belonging

Another targeted project focused on social interaction through sport. Milton Keynes Council and The Red Cross were supporting several young refugees. Aged between 15 -18 years, they had arrived in the UK with nothing and were isolated, but football was a shared passion.

All People Active were instrumental in setting up a football club specifically for refugees. They worked in partnership with other organisations to bring refugees together and offer something of value.

This affordable weekly session was held on quality pitches in Milton Keynes. It included a range of activities including match play and challenges to maintain interest and fun. This encouraged individuals to keep coming back.

After football, refreshments were provided to encourage the young people to stay, socialise and get support from MK Council workers. Some were supported with college applications or signposted to provision including English language lessons. They may not have accessed this support without football to encourage attendance. The sessions have helped them to gain a support network and to integrate into the community.

One participant has been especially enthusiastic in organising the others and ensuring they turn up. He is now keen to volunteer to help lead future sessions. It is great to cultivate such enthusiasm and talent. He says:

***“When taking part in sessions I feel good, football has increased my confidence”***

Most of the attendees wanted to play for fun, to feel good and to make friends, but 3 were more serious. They were introduced to the local club and now play for the Men’s team.

The commitment of all partners and a small attendance charge has made this a sustainable project. There are now plans to take the group to watch an MK Dons match.

## The 'C' Factors – A Winning Formula

When reviewing the Satellite Club Project, Leap identified 4 'C's as being essential for accessible, engaging and sustainable clubs.

- **Community-minded clubs and coaches**
- **Collaboration between parties**
- **Charging for sessions**
- **Cultivating talent**

### Community-minded Clubs and Coaches

If the priority of the club or coach is to make money, it hasn't worked. Even if they are hoping to boost club membership, (which was the reason Sport England initially thought clubs would engage), results can be disappointing. What worked was finding coaches that were driven by the possibility of inspiring others.

A great example of this is a Satellite Golf Club in South Bucks. Golf is not a sport that many young people have the opportunity to experience. The cost of 1:1 lessons, equipment and acceptable golf wear is high and the formality can also be off-putting.

With a fresh approach and support from both Leap and the Golf Foundation, one golf club was open to the challenge. They were lenient about the dress code and set up interactive and engaging group sessions. This long-running satellite club helped to break down the barriers of entry into golf with the sessions attracting a large number of girls.

*"I enjoy playing golf with Girl Golf Rocks as I get to play with girls my age and make friends :)" -Suhaani*

*"I like playing golf because it improves my courage and it lets me know I'm not the only girl who can play!" - Paige*

### Collaboration Between Parties

In a bid to reduce the financial cost of running a satellite club, collaboration has often been a factor.

In Milton Keynes, Leap brought together a tennis club and a secondary school. The professional coaches give their time and skills, whilst the secondary school provides free use of the tennis courts. The coaches use the courts for the satellite club and an additional hour for a paid primary club session. This combination offset the cost of the 'lost leader'.

Holding the primary sessions in secondary school has additional benefits. It gives the primary club children access to specialist sports facilities. They develop their racket skills and have a fun experience in the school, which ultimately supports the transition between Year 6 and 7.

### Charging for Sessions

Whilst the cost of sports participation can be a barrier, Leap has found that clubs that make a small charge are more sustainable. In part, this is because it contributes to running costs.

More significantly, payment encourages commitment. When a class is paid for, young people (and their parents) value it more and are likely to turn up.

### Cultivating Coaching Talent

When sessions are popular and well-attended, it can be expensive to cover the cost of two or more coaches. In areas of deprivation even paying £1 a week can often be seen as too much due to families prioritising their income elsewhere. To address this, some satellite clubs work with Leap to offer older participants or staff members (such as youth workers) the chance to train up. With the right skills and enthusiasm, they are then equipped to assist with sessions.

This development opportunity builds confidence, self-esteem and employability skills. The approach can support a future career in sports coaching for young people and removes the need to bring in new people to help maintain popular satellite clubs.

One coach, who offered a young leader qualification at one of our satellite clubs, has seen several participants go on to be employed by the local leisure centre.

***“Giving as many opportunities to lead as possible helps to break down the uncomfortable feeling of delivery or being in the spotlight. Young people are able to develop valuable skills such as organisation, time keeping, responsibility, fast solution solving and creativity. In turn, these skills increase CV building and employability. As a mentor, it is wonderful to watch students flourish and even better when they approach you offering to help or attain their next qualification.”***

***- Heidi Leseur, Squash Coach***

## Innovations for Lockdown and Future Sessions

In the last year, lockdown resulted in the closure of community sports clubs, leisure facilities and Satellite Clubs.

Whilst many clubs were forced to stop, it provided an opportunity for a club that Leap had not previously worked with. Muay Thai kickboxing is taught by Safari MMA Milton Keynes. They were concerned about the mental health of young people during lockdown and were open to a new way of teaching.

Safari MMA embraced technology, offering twice-weekly remote Muay Thai sessions via Zoom. Aimed at beginners, the first 4 sessions were offered without charge, to attract interest. A WhatsApp group was set up to provide support and reminders to anyone who had signed up.

The sessions were widely promoted by Safari MMA club members and attracted interest from a wide geographical area. Some participants said that they would not have been able to attend the classes in Milton Keynes, but could join remotely. Others reported that the option to not use a camera made them feel less intimidated to have a go. The benefit of learning online is illustrated in this participant feedback:

*“A lot of the gyms that do teach this type of sports are males dominated and my family had a problem with that, let alone they didn’t want any male to use their force on me or teach me how to be tough as that didn’t really match the culture and its teachings. I wanted to be able to defend myself alone and learn something but, in an environment where I feel comfortable enough and understood so I can be myself and learn. When this opportunity came up it was simply great timing and opportunity for me. Although it was online and was all strange to me it is great to be able to do it from my home and assure my parents that I am learning a skill that could help me”*

To maintain interest, Safari MMA offered participants the opportunity to work towards exams that earned them coloured belts. These motivated individuals, encouraged participation and they are rewarded for their effort and achievement.

Seeing the impact of going online has encouraged Safari MMA to look at online sessions as a way of expanding their reach and allowing more people to benefit from positive physical activity.

## Sustainable Clubs

We are delighted that 51 Satellite clubs will continue to provide accessible, affordable and enjoyable activities for young people even though the official National programme has ended. This is a testament to all involved.

## Final Thoughts From Leap

Often funding is short term. Whilst this can give people an opportunity to try something new for a few weeks, it isn't sufficient time to establish new habits and active lifestyles.

With a long-term vision, the Satellite Clubs project had time to develop collaboration between many different organisations. This resulted in sustainable provision, which will continue even though funding has now ended.

## Lessons Learned

Not all clubs have been successful. In exploring why some clubs cease, we have identified the following factors:

- There was not full buy-in from partner organisations, or those organisations expectations about increased membership were not met
- Activities were offered at locations that required young people to travel, which were unfamiliar and not where they choose to hang out
- There was too much focus on the activity; a less formal approach with an opportunity to socialise or incorporate sport with other activities was favoured

Spanning over several years we have had the chance to learn and evolve delivery. With feedback from participants and partners, the projects became far more effective at meeting the desired objectives.

We now know that offering a good variety of activities helps us to reach those who don't enjoy P.E. in school and including activities as part of a wider programme can attract interest. It is also a great revelation to discover that online provision, with regular communication and goals, can make certain activities more widely accessible.

***“The Satellite Club programme has been one of the great Children and Young People programmes that we, as an Active Partnership, have been privileged to lead on for 8 years. As the programme comes to its natural end, the impact it has had on young people in both Education and Community settings has been rewarding to everyone involved.***

***Satellite Clubs have created some amazing and lasting relationships with partners and stakeholders across the county. This will only enhance the work that we do to support our continued journey to improve the health and wellbeing of Children and Young People through Physical Activity.***

***I am so proud of the work we have achieved. I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this fantastic programme and who have made it such a success.”***

***- Mark Stokes, Children & Young People Development Manager, Leap***