

Institution: Canterbury Christ Church University
Unit of Assessment: Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism (26)
Title of case study: The Olympic Physical Activity, Sport and Health (OPASH) Legacy Project
1. Summary of the impact

In 2005 London secured the right to host the 2012 Olympic Games following a promise the Games would “inspire a new generation to choose sport”. This promise was made without any knowledge of the evidence about whether or how this could be achieved.

Research since 2006 in the *Centre for Sport, Physical Education & Activity Research (SPEAR)* has provided evidence for the processes that might be harnessed to use the London 2012 Games to encourage physical activity and sport participation, and identified the groups among whom such processes can be effective. Chronologically, the impact of this evidence has been to: (a) introduce new evidence-based concepts to policy-makers and the public (2007-2009); (b) inform national government policies and programmes (2009-2011); (c) inform regional and local plans, programmes and activities (2010-2012); (d) hold government policy to account and inform international debate (2010-2013). In addition, for end users (b) and (c) have impacted upon sport and physical activity behaviours, whilst (a) and (d) have stimulated debate, in the UK and internationally, about the possibility of using major events to generate physical activity and sport participation outcomes.

2. Underpinning research

An initial ESRC seminar series showed that governmental reliance on an economic discourse to describe, discuss and justify legacy outcomes outside London was leading to a lack of emphasis on social, cultural and health legacies that cannot be quantified or presented in economic terms, which in turn was leading to missed opportunities and frustration among stakeholders. In particular, the potential to leverage pre-Games ‘pregnancy’ (as opposed to post-Games legacy) benefits, particularly in terms of physical activity and sport participation, was being missed.

Prior to the body of work described here, received wisdom fell into two camps: firstly, among cynics, that London 2012 could not deliver a physical activity and sport participation legacy as no previous Games had done so; secondly, among those positive about such legacies, that elite sport universally inspires non-participants to try sport. *SPEAR’s* systematic review of worldwide evidence (1,3) demonstrated that both of these perspectives are flawed. Firstly, the *SPEAR* review showed that, while it is true that no previous Games has resulted in population level increases in physical activity or sport participation and thus there is no evidence for an inherent effect, no previous Games has developed systematic programmes or strategies that seek to use a Games to increase population level physical activity or sport participation. As such, there are no previous examples of Games that have attempted to deliver such legacies. However, there were examples of specific interventions that had shown positive outcomes at the initiative level, but that were not on a scale that would affect population level participation data (2,3). This initiative level data allowed *SPEAR* to identify two processes by which a Games might affect physical activity and sport participation:

(i) *Demonstration Effect* – elite sport, sports people and sports events can encourage those who participate a little to participate a little more, and can encourage those who have participated in the past to participate again. However, this effect cannot inspire those who are not interested in sport to participate – in fact, it can have a negative effect in deterring such people from participating as a result of a perceived ‘competence gap’ (3).

(ii) *Festival Effect* – events on the scale of the Olympic Games create in people a desire, if not an urge, to be part of the celebrations of the event, and this effect is enhanced if the event is promoted as bigger than and beyond sport. Thus, among the least active and sedentary who are disinterested in sport, a festival effect can be harnessed to encourage active celebration of the Games whilst de-emphasising sporting and health messages that may be off-putting (1,3).

SPEAR’s work showed that each effect is dependent on a positive attitude towards the hosting of the Games among those targeted, and that they are most powerful in the run up to the Games capitalising on anticipation, rather than in the Games aftermath capitalising on memory (1,2,3).

Subsequent analysis of national participation data for Sport England (4) showed that around 25% of England’s adult sporting population (those who have played at least once in the last year) are responsive to a demonstration effect, but this rises to 35% among those who are not club members and participate less than twice a week (ie, those most likely to be the targets of policy to increase participation). This data allowed an analysis of Sport England’s market segments to identify target

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groups to be identified for demonstration effect initiatives as part of the production of an evidence based guide for the Department of Health (DoH) (5). This analysis showed that segments could be identified that included 15% of the population, but in which 40% would be those responsive to a demonstration effect (4,5). A similar analysis was undertaken of the DoH's Change 4 Life Family Clusters to identify which clusters would be most responsive to festival effects. These analyses were used to match target groups to potential initiatives (5).

This work was carried out at CCCU (2006 – 2010) by Prof **Weed** (2006 -), Readers **Chatziefstathiou** (2005 -) and **Wellard** (2003 -) and **Dowse** (2008 -) (all included in REF1), plus Fiore (PhD student 2008-2012), Coren (submitted in UoA3) and Mansfield (1995 - 2011).

3. References to the research

- (1) Weed, M., Coren, E., Fiore, J., Wellard, I. Mansfield, L., Chatziefstathiou, D. & Dowse, S. (2012). Developing a Physical Activity Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: A policy-led systematic review. *Perspectives in Public Health* 132(2), 75-80.
- (2) Weed, M. (2010). How will we know if the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympic Benefit Health? *British Medical Journal* 2010;340:c2202.
- (3) Weed, M., Coren, E., Fiore, J., Wellard, I. Mansfield, L., Chatziefstathiou, D. & Dowse, S. (2009). *A Systematic Review of the Evidence Base for Developing a Physical Activity and Health Legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*. London: Department of Health.
- (4) Weed, M. (2010) *The Potential of the Demonstration Effect to Grow and Sustain Participation in Sport*. London: Sport England.
- (5) Weed, M., Mansfield, L. & Dowse, S. (2010). *Active Celebration: Using the London 2012 Games to Get the Nation Moving*. London: Department of Health.

The above cited outputs are derived from four interlinked funded projects. The first of these was an ESRC award in 2007 for an exploratory Research Seminar Series in 2008/9 awarded to **Weed** (Principal Investigator) in collaboration with Ladkin (Co-Investigator) at Bournemouth University, entitled Leveraging Social, Cultural and Health Benefits from London 2012 (RES-451-26-0403). This was the first grant awarded by the ESRC on the subject of the 2012 Games. Following this, in 2008 the DoH (Physical Activity Co-ordinators Group) commissioned *SPEAR* by competitive tender to undertake a worldwide evidence review to underpin the development of physical activity legacies from London 2012 (3), and this commission was extended in 2009 to include the development of an evidence based guide (5). Also in 2009, Sport England awarded **Weed**, by competitive tender, a contract to analyse national sport participation data for evidence of an Olympic demonstration effect on sport participation (4). As a result of the impact of this body of work, **Weed** was invited to write a commentary for the British Medical Journal on the impact of the Games on health (2), the online version of which has been accessed over 3,400 times. The reports listed pre-date the partial academic publication of the substantive research findings (1) in a journal with established peer-review standards listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index. The Royal Society for Public Health, which owns *Perspectives in Public Health*, recognised the quality of (1), using it as a designated CPD piece for its 6,000+ members. In 2012, this body of work received a Bronze Award in the Podium Awards for Exceptional Research Contribution to the 2012 Games (sponsored by Research Councils UK). Outputs have been endorsed by four government Ministers: Burnham (3) and Milton (5) (DoH) and Bradshaw (3) and Robertson (4) (DCMS).

4. Details of the impact

(a) *Introducing new evidence-based concepts to policy-makers and the public (2007-2009)*

This body of work coined the terms 'demonstration effect' and 'festival effect', and introduced them into the UK legacy policy discourse, both through the immediate users commissioning the research (eg DoH, Sport England) and through intermediate users engaging with the work (eg regional development agencies and local government). As such, the use of these terms in policy documents or discourse can be directly attributed to the *SPEAR* work (6). While the initial ESRC seminar series contributed to the debate about the potential for legacies outside London among immediate users involved in the series and among end users among the wider public through the national press (eg The Guardian, 10/8/2007), the significance of the work in informing policy was first highlighted in the government's national physical activity plan in 2009 (7). This plan cited interim findings as providing the "best available international evidence [to] maximis[e] the opportunities in the run-up to the 2012 Games and will be used to guide the development of the regional 2012 health legacy plans across England" (p.51).

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(b) Informing national government policies and programmes (2009-2011)

In 2009, in a major speech on physical activity policy (8) following the delivery of *SPEAR's* systematic review report to the immediate user (DoH), the Secretary of State, Andy Burnham, noted “the evidence from past sporting events suggests the Games are likely to have two distinct effects on the general public. The first is the demonstration effect...[but] the second effect – the festival effect – [is] crucial...This, for me, is the effect we need to maximise.” Given these effects, Burnham goes on to note that “It’s vital we make full use of major sporting events as a catalyst which is why I want to start a dialogue with sports governing bodies. With Ben Bradshaw [Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport], I want to work with them to develop physical activity legacy plans alongside the sports legacy plans they have to promote physical activity before, during and after the event – to maximise the ‘festival effect’ of this golden decade.” Burnham goes on to list a range of initiatives in dance, walking, cycling and swimming that will seek to harness the festival effect identified by *SPEAR's* research, including:

- i) The addition of Dance4Life and Play4Life sub brands to Change4Life
- ii) The establishment of a Dance Champions Group, including Strictly Come Dancing personalities Arlene Phillips (judge), Angela Rippon (former host) and Lisa Snowdon (former contestant).
- iii) A Walking for Health 2012 campaign with Natural England to deliver 200k people more active.
- iv) A national programme of cycling opportunities similar to the Sky sponsored Skyline events.
- v) An additional £1m to allow councils not yet signed up for the free swimming initiative to do so.

This clearly represents a significant range of initiatives developed by the immediate research user with a clear reach to impact upon intermediate and end users. Furthermore, Burnham’s speech demonstrates that, although *SPEAR's* research may not have directly stimulated these initiatives, it did provide significant evidence for the purpose and direction that the initiatives should take, with Burnham concluding “So August 2019, we come back to this room. Successful events staged. A rack of medals and even a couple of big trophies won. Great memories. But the biggest prize - everybody more active than they were.”

Although the prevailing economic climate and the change of government in 2010 led to the scaling-back of some of these initiatives, there were clear programme changes informed by the research in 2009-10, and these also impacted on end users at the time (ii, v), whilst those that survived the change of government (i) or did so on a smaller scale (iii, iv) continued to impact upon end users from 2010. In fact, the research retained influence among immediate users in the new government, with the Coalition’s Plans for the Legacy of the 2012 Games (9) noting that “the Responsibility Deal for Public Health will draw upon the ‘festival effect’ of the Games to encourage healthy, active lifestyles” (p.5), and the Minister for Sport, Hugh Robertson, reporting in Parliament that Weed’s Sport England report had guided his assessment of the relationship between elite level sport and mass participation in sport at grassroots level (10). Robertson also noted that UK Sport was currently finalising research into the inspirational effects of major sports events, research commissioned from a partnership between *SPEAR* and Sheffield Hallam University in 2011. Similarly, in endorsing the use of Active Celebration in the NHS Sport & Physical Activity Challenge, Anne Milton, the Minister for Public Health, commented that *SPEAR's* evidence-based guide “is a key resource...to create a lasting legacy of healthier, more active communities” (11).

Examples of intermediate users of the *SPEAR* research at the national level have been SportCoachUK, who cite *SPEAR's* systematic review (p.2) as underpinning their coaching legacy strategy (12), and the Scottish Physical Activity and Health Alliance, who advocate the use of Active Celebration to develop legacies from the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow (13). *SPEAR's* systematic review was also directly considered in the Culture, Media and Sport Commons Select Committee’s report on the legacy of the 2012 Games (14).

(c) Informing regional and local plans, programmes and activities (2010-2012)

Through the DoH’s regional physical activity network, *SPEAR's* research, particularly the evidence-based guide, Active Celebration, achieved considerable reach among intermediate users in regional and local government across England, with *SPEAR* staff running over 20 workshops on the implementation of the findings at local level in all English regions from 2010 to 2012. In just one example, *SPEAR's* research is noted (pp.10-11) as underpinning Inspire North West: The Health and Wellbeing Framework for the 2012 Games (15), and similar references can be found in the strategies and frameworks of the other English regions. Furthermore, despite the scaling-back of initiatives at national level following the formation of the Coalition government in 2010, Active Celebration continued to reach intermediate users - local health and physical activity promotion

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practitioners - throughout England, from Hampshire in the South (16) to North Yorkshire in the North East (17) and, of course, in London, where one Borough alone invested £90k in the initiative (18). While there is no systematic evaluation of the detail of the impact of this research on end users (the least active and sedentary members of the public), its continued use to inform the activities and programmes developed by local health practitioners and professionals as intermediate users suggests that it has important reach and likely significance for such end users.

(d) Holding government policy to account and informing international debate (2010-2013)

Since the change of government in 2010 and the rationalisation of sport participation legacy policy, *SPEAR*'s research has been used to highlight shortcomings in national policy, particularly the lack of any meaningful policies to use the 2012 Games to stimulate demand, thus stimulating public debate among end users of the research to help hold government policy to account. Particularly following the publication of Places People Play, the government's Mass Participation Legacy Plan, but also before this, critiques of government policy directly featuring *SPEAR*'s research have featured in, *inter alia*, The Times (18/12/2010), The Telegraph (20/5/2010), and the British Medical Journal (23/6/2011) and, internationally, in The New York Times (15/2/2011), The Washington Post (28/3/2011), and the Canadian Medical Association Journal (19/4/2011). **Weed** has featured in several TV documentaries, in which *SPEAR* research has been used to directly challenge the former Olympics Minister, Tessa Jowell (Sky News, 19/12/2010) and the current Minister for Sport, Hugh Robertson (BBC One, 25/2/2011) about their policies for Olympic sport legacies, and this has been supplemented by over 30 similar appearances on local and national radio (2010-2013). As such, this body of work has managed to achieve the somewhat unlikely dual outcome of both informing government policy and holding government policy to account.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- (6) (former) DoH Physical Activity Co-ordinator South East, Commissioning Lead for *SPEAR*'s DoH research – to corroborate the influence of the research on national, regional and local policy and practice, and the *SPEAR* research as the source of the terms “demonstration effect” and “festival effect” in such national, regional and local policy. **(Contact I.D. 1)**
- (7) HM Government (2009) Be Active, Be Healthy: A plan for getting the nation moving. http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/en/publicationsandstatistics/publications/publicationspolicyandguidance/dh_094358
- (8) Speech by Andy Burnham MP, Secretary of State for Health, 13/8/2009: Fit for the future - can we build a more active Britain? http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.dh.gov.uk/en/MediaCentre/Speeches/DH_104324
- (9) DCMS (2010) Plans for the Legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. <http://www.culture.gov.uk/publications/7674.aspx>
- (10) Hansard, 6th December 2010: Column 89W-90W. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101206/text/101206w0004.htm>
- (11) NHS (2010) Harnessing the Power of 2012 to improve the Health and Wellbeing of Local Communities. <http://www.sportandphysicalactivity.nhs.uk/active-celebration>
- (12) NCF (2010) Beyond 2012: A Legacy for Coaching in England. http://www.sportscoachuk.org/sites/default/files/A%20coaching%20legacy%20for%20England_0.pdf
- (13) Scottish Physical Activity and Health Alliance (2009) Active Celebration. <http://www.paha.org.uk/Resource/active-celebration-using-the-london-2012-games-to-get-the-nation-moving>
- (14) Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee (2010) Olympic Paralympic Games 2012: Legacy. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmcmums/416/416we32.htm>
- (15) NHS North West (2010) Inspire North West: The Health and Wellbeing Framework for the 2012 Games <http://www.nwfor2012.com/about/our-plans/health>
- (16) Sport Hampshire (2012) Theme4: Physical Activity <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/bifl-theme4.pdf>
- (17) Richmondshire District Council (2012) Active Celebration. <http://www.richmondshire.gov.uk/news-and-publications/press-releases/activecelebration.aspx>
- (18) Pro-Active London (2011) The Active Celebration <http://www.pro-activesouthlondon.org/landing.asp?section=00010001000300350012§ionTitle=The+Active+Celebration&preview=1>